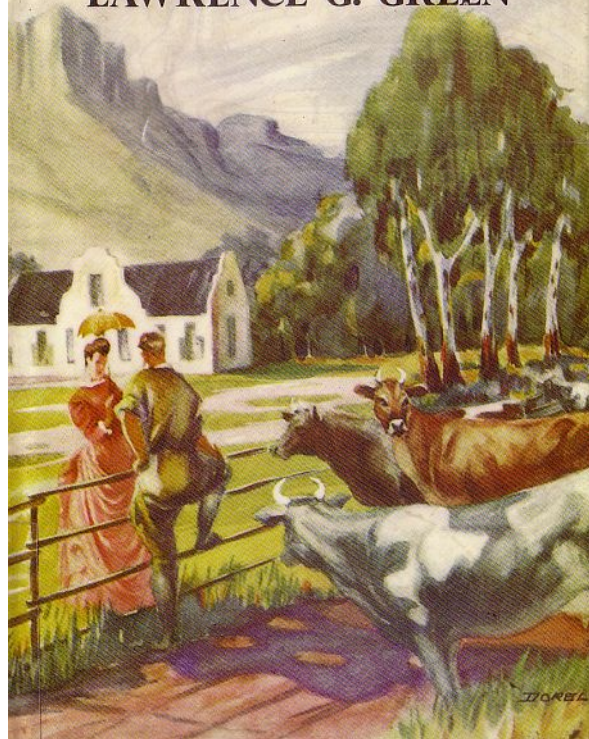


BEYOND THE CITY LIGHTS

LAWRENCE G. GREEN



ILLUSTRATIONS

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Paarl Vineyards
Bellingham
Huguenot
Du Toit's Kloof Pass
Du Toit' Kloof
Jonkershoek
Wheatlands
Montagu
Pont
Blue Buck

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CHAPTER 1

OAK AND CANNON

New Year's Day in the furnace of Western Province, but the heat cannot harm me. I have been among friends on a hospitable farm stoep, looking out from the eastern slopes of the Perdeberg, and now I am driving home in the night with a comfortable and benevolent feeling.

No doubt the brandy had something to do with it, the mature brandy that certain farmers secure from their distillery on enviable terms, but which costs me a fortune in town. Certainly the *hoenderpastei* also influenced me. This is the dish which is the special pride of the old Cape districts, a chicken pie with a difference: I do not know whether the crushed coriander seeds and wine give it a special character; or the lean pork and herbs, the blade of mace or the puff pastry. At all events it is the great dish of the Western Province, so good indeed that you can eat your fill at night and still look forward to finishing the pie for breakfast.

With the *hoenderpastei* I drank a Paarl wine which cannot be bought. Then came the cheese and summer fruits and liqueurs of the farm, so that the experience lingers as a noble memory. They made me carry off bottles of the wine I had admired. Thus I am mellow and thoughtful as I drive through the hot darkness towards the cool dark sea.

For this has been more than a meal. The man who sent me this New Year's Day invitation has set my mind working. He is an invalid, crippled after as active a life as any man could lead; a retired forest officer, nursed by his wife like a baby. But he is also a philosopher. He has memories, and a cheerful nature which illness cannot subdue. "An earthbound man like myself lives on his imagination, and you will be staggered when you hear of the journeys I have planned when God permits," he told me. Beside his bed I saw Toynbee's "Study of History" between Melt Brink and a text-book on Arab horses. "One day I shall scramble on Kismet's back into a cowboy

saddle and start travelling again," remarked this old horseman calmly.

Then he talked of the trees he had seen. In his young days there was no forestry course in South Africa, and so he had gone from the old Victoria College, Stellenbosch, to learn his craft in the United States. He had stood in groves of immortal redwoods and wandered among gigantic firs. On the Mississippi banks he had listened spellbound while the negroes opened their hearts and revealed the spirit of the river in their melancholy yearning songs.

This man spoke fondly of the Knysna evergreens, the scarlet-flowering kaffirboom of the Amatola range, sneezewood and boxwood, Cape ebony and Cape mahogany and the gnarled and scented cedars of the Cedarberg. He talked for a long time of distant landscapes seen from the saddle. At last he returned to this farm, his birthplace, the little Western Province farm on the Perdeberg that had

waited all his life for him.¹ And then he raised himself in bed, and his eyes shone as he lifted his glass and gave me a toast. "Here's to the happy Boland, the grand old Western Province! Drink to the land of oak and cannon, the land of wine and bread!"

By this time a number of friends had gathered round the bed. One of them asked: "Where is the Boland? What is the Western Province? Where does it begin and end? "I listened to the argument and made some inquiries of my own, so that now I am fairly sure of the answers.

You will remember a rascally and intolerant old governor named Lord Charles Somerset who feathered his own nest without paying the penalty. In his time an official commission recommended that the Cape Colony should be split into two provinces, with the Cape governor ruling the Western Province and a lieutenant governor in the Eastern Province.

¹ My friend Piet Botha died not long after my visit, but I have left my memories of him unaltered.

This was more than the colony could afford, and the plan was abandoned. However, two divisions were set up, the Western consisting of the districts of the Cape, Stellenbosch, Swellendam (which then included Caledon), and Worcester, which was a huge area running up to the northern frontiers of the colony. Thus the so-called Western Province arose, though it was merely a division.

Officially there is no such place as the Western Province to-day. However, I think it is generally accepted that if a slightly-curved line is drawn from the mouth of the Olifants River on the west coast to the Breede River in the south, this will mark the Western Province boundaries. It will include Clanwilliam and Montagu, and most people would be in favour of taking in Swellendam as well.

The Boland, which my friend coupled with the Western Province in his toast, is a rather smaller area: the winter rainfall area of the Cape running from the Berg River mouth to Swellendam. Tulbagh, Ceres, Piketberg and

Porterville are all in the Boland, and so is Robertson. I am not so sure, however, about Montagu and Ashton. Probably the experts would say that the whole of the Boland lies within the Western Province.

"Here's to the happy Boland, the grand old Western Province! "As I drive home to-night it occurs to me that most of the Western Province has gone to the seaside. Last night, no doubt, they were dancing, and I am wondering whether there are still farms where the *dorsvloer* is used, the hard, flat threshing-floor. In the old days the concertina would still be playing Jan Pierewiet when the sun rose. And on New Year's Day the old-fashioned ovens would be stoked up so that the sucking-pigs and turkeys could be roasted. Some of the Tulbagh people choose the mountains at New Year rather than the seaside. High in the Winterberg there is a shady dip called Sneeu-gat, where the snow lies deep in winter, a cool place even in midsummer. So it is the custom to camp there

for a week or more as an escape from the heat of the valley. Sometimes you will find scores of Tulbagh folk of all ages living in roofless shelters. A waterfall in the neighbourhood is the favourite bathing place.

Many families from Paarl and Wellington drive to Du Toit's Kloof, observing a New Year custom which arose a century and more before the road made the climb easy. Perhaps they still give the children model water-wheels, which turn in the streams near the waterfalls. Years ago, when wild flowers could be picked without fear of prosecution, there was much rivalry in the search for disas and other plants. Among the prized growths of these mountains is the rare and lovely *Nuwejaarsblom* (*Gladiolus cardinalis*), which Dorothea Fairbridge called "Maid of the Mist" and others have named "New Year Lily" or "Waterfall Gladiolus". The bright scarlet flowers appear in midsummer, as the Afrikaans name suggests, and the petals quiver on long stems.

According to Paarl legend, many a young man courting a pretty girl was informed by the prospective father-in-law that he would be welcome at the house only if he brought a *Nuwejaarsblom* as a sign of his courage. For this flower usually grows in dangerous places; on moist precipices beside the waterfalls. Sunbirds and butterflies reach them easily and feed on the nectar, but a climber may pluck the flower only at the risk of his life. I cannot say that the *Nuwejaarsblom* became a rarity owing to raids by daring lovers. Baboons and mountain fires destroyed the bulbs. Seedsmen and amateur gardeners collected too many of the specimens that survived. Now both flowers and bulbs are protected against human interference.

Marloth found this exquisite, *gladiolus* growing with *Disa uni flora* in the French Hoek mountains. "Never shall I forget that sight," wrote the botanist who had seen so many floral wonders. It was the show piece of a "fairy glen" filled with tree ferns, Cape holly and red

alder. The flowers of the *Nuwejaarsblom* have a faint lily scent.

If you dislike mountain ordeals you can see the *Nuwejaarsblom* in the Paarl mountain flower reserve. Two brothers, Amie and Manas de Villiers, secured the bulbs more than twenty years ago after a perilous climb beside a one-hundred foot waterfall in Du Toit's Kloof. This bulb is not easily nurtured away from its natural home, but flowers appeared fairly recently after everyone had given up hope.

For me the New Year has opened well. What else can I look forward to, what pleasures will the Western Province seasons bring? Pleasure delights in contrasts, and in this countryside there are contrasts round almost every bend in the road.

Once more I hope to see the baskets of little wine grapes with romantic names coming in from the vineyards. In February and March the juice of riesling and muscadel, hermitage and gamay, will be pouring into thousands of vats.

Many thousands of people will line the streets of Paarl to watch the vintage festival; the cellarmen rolling their barrels, the maidens of the vineyard, the wine wagon, the clowns and carnival, Malay singers and folk dancers.

When I first saw wine pressed, there were still many farmers who dumped their grapes into the *trapbalie* and set the coloured youths and girls (with scrupulously clean feet) trampling the juice out of the berries. Juice and husks then went into a fermenting vat, which bubbled like a stew. When this liquid cooled it became *soet mos*, pleasant and apparently harmless. But if you followed a glass of *soet mos* with a brandy, the effects were devastating. Many an innocent visitor to a wine farm has been caught in this way by practical jokers; especially visitors who boasted of their capacity for liquor.

March is the month when the yellowfleshed peaches ripen; when the mules draw their light spring wagons between the long straight rows of peach trees and carry the boxes of

fruit to the packing sheds and canning factories. More picturesque is the drying process, with the women and girls singing as they slice and stone the peaches and set out the trays. First the peaches go to the sulphur house. Then they are dried in the sun for eight or nine days, until they are ready for packing.

An almost forgotten Cape fruit delicacy, known as *Plat Perske*, consisted of dried ripe peaches made up into squares. They quenched the thirst of many old travellers. There is also a yellow peach pickle in which the peaches are preserved in vinegar with onions, chillies and ginger.

These are arts that go right back to the Huguenots, the first farmers at the Cape to prepare dried fruit, apart from raisins. Simon van der Stel encouraged them, for dried fruit was a fine thing on board the scurvy-stricken ships of the Company. Some of the Huguenots had owned fruit farms in France. They had to use their wits in the French Hoek valley, and

when they dried their fruit they made lye from *gannabos* ash.

A million pear trees in the Western Province give up their fruit in March - Bon Chretiens and Packham's Triumphs and the rest: Only a patient man plants a pear orchard, for the trees take from eight to twenty years to bear, and it is no great consolation to know that they will still be standing eighty or a hundred years later. You find some remarkable old pear trees along Western Province roads. They have not been pruned for years, but the crop is there for any traveller to eat.

It is possible to make *peerwyn* from certain types of pear, and farm labourers are fully aware of the fact. Saffron pears yield a syrup which farm servants like to spread on their bread. Calabash pears are for cooking, and very good fritters they make.

Another fruit tree often found on old farms is the medlar, with its large and decorative white flowers. Van Riebeeck planted the first of

them, and a great deal of medlar jelly has been made since his day. But this fruit has never been in great demand. You have to store your medlars until the flesh softens. The fruit is at its best when it looks rotten; hence its unpopularity.

Country people of all ages search the veld keenly during the Western Province autumn, using their noses as much as their eyes. The hunt for *koekmakrankas* is on. In the old days everyone joined in. Magistrate and minister, doctor and shopkeeper, men, women and children went home with the orange-coloured stems in their hatbands. But the *koekmakranka* is not gathered as a decoration. It is a medicine.

This quaint name, which sounds like Hottentot, appears to have been corrupted from the Afrikaans words '*goed vir my krank maag*' (good for my sick stomach). Two generations ago you could gather a hundred *koekmakrankas* any afternoon in the season close to Ceres or Darling. Sheep and veld-

burning, baboons, porcupines and the plough have decimated the plant species which botanists call *Gethyllis spiralis*. Far-sighted collectors go out in summer, when tiny pink, jasmine-scented, star-shaped flowers appear, and ring them with pebbles to mark the inconspicuous fruit. I have also heard of people who prefer to seek the fruit on moonlight nights, guided entirely by the aroma.

"This pod was the length of one's finger and had a pleasant smell," reported Thunberg, the Swedish botanist, who was among the first to describe the fruit. "It was held in great esteem by the ladies. The smell of it resembled in some measure that of strawberries, and filled the whole room."

I found a recipe for *koekmakranka* brandy in a Cape "Agricultural journal" published last century. "Put a little of this highly-scented fruit in a little good brandy," directed the writer. "The perfume will be transferred to the spirit within a few days and a beautiful nip will be at your command." The writer

declared that this Cape liqueur rivalled the imported yellow chartreuse. He added: "The astonishing name of the plant is of itself enough to create a demand."

Mr. F. J. O'Kennedy, one of the Afrikaans-speaking O'Kennedys who spent his youth in the Darling district, once gave me a fragrant sample of *koekmakranka* brandy and assured me that it would accomplish all that was claimed for it in attacks of stomach-ache. He knew two varieties - the *ruikertjie* of the Darling area, growing in hard soil and soon losing its leaves; and the *sand koekmakranka* of Hopefield, thicker and reddish in colour, keeping its leaves throughout the year. The pod is carrot-shaped, often five inches long, with a sweet, pulpy centre and seeds in a transparent skin.

One of the old country remedies for the teething troubles of babies is a draught made by steeping *koekmakrankas* in boiling water. The same medicine is given to older people suffering from heartburn or palpitations. Boils and carbuncles, bruises and insect bites are treated with

koekmakranka skin. This is, of course, one of the ancient medicines inherited from the Hottentots.

Many a farm linen cupboard is redolent with the *koekmakranka* aroma, for it is believed that it repels moths and other insects. And there cannot be an old home in the Western Province which has books without *koekmakranka* stems as markers. They last for years and scent the pages, so that when the wandering children return home at last, the memories of youth may be aroused by the opening of a favourite book.

My own autumn and winter quest is for mushrooms. Only in recent years have the botanists discovered that the Western Province has the greatest number of edible mushroom species on earth. I am all for the field mushroom, the *eetbare sampioen*, which grows on a Durbanville farm I know. Every year after the first winter rains the "fairy rings" appear and I pick those which have opened to show their pink gills. I have also collected and eaten the shaggy ink-cap, which tastes far better than it looks; the orange milk-cap which grows in the pine woods;

and the lovely white parasol, which has a poisonous sister of similar appearance. However, the false parasol does not grow in the Cape, so I am safe.

The cep, or edible boletus, is also common in certain areas which I visit, and this is the favourite of French epicures. I place the field mushroom first, as I said. Sometimes I fry it with my morning bacon. When I want the mushroom flavour alone and at its best, I put my field mushrooms in a glass oven dish, drop a pat of butter on each mushroom, and bake them with the lid on until they are tender. No finer method of cooking mushrooms has ever been devised. As a change, however, I will allow a powdering of nutmeg, and a little sherry in the bottom of the dish. Grilling is also permissible, but you should brush the caps with butter or olive oil.

I have two little books by Miss Edith Stephens which I carry in my pocket when I go out after mushrooms. One book describes the edible types while the other is devoted to deadly or inedible fungi. When I come across *duiwelskos*

in the shape of a death cup, a fly agaric or panther, I stamp on it.

Once I bought a pound of mushrooms from a coloured hawker. I had never seen that particular species before, but then I am no expert, and even the authorities on this subject are often baffled. The mushrooms I bought were larger and sturdier than field mushrooms, with a brownish colouring. To my amazement, I could not find them in either of my little books, so I sent them to Miss Stephens. Her verdict gave me a second surprise. My mushrooms were of a new species, unknown to botanists.

Some years ago a German authority on mushrooms visited the Cape and was shown a number of species regarded locally as poisonous. He surprised his hosts by selecting some of those considered deadly and munching them raw with every sign of enjoyment. Then he swallowed them and survived. Miss Stephens tastes all the mysterious fungi which come before her, but she does not swallow

them. Rats and guinea pigs carry out the final test.

When I am tired of the city there is a road into the Western Province which I have taken at all the seasons. After an hour the road becomes a track. With seven gates to open, not so many of you will wish to follow me along my almost secret path to country scenes which touch the chords of youthful memories each time I drive that way.

After another hour the track leads to a dune world beside a stretch of water, a forgotten arm of the sea lying calm and warm inland. Just a century ago a Cape governor wrote a sentence which fits this secluded Western Province backwater exactly. "There is no country in the world," he declared, "where a man with a family and little or no capital could thrive better, if given half an acre, with sufficient commonage for the pasture of his cows." Here at the end of my run are people living under

old thatch, growing their vegetables, catching their fish, and not worrying very much about the cost of living.

Full summer is not my favourite time in the dune world, though it is pleasant enough in the water. Sometimes the south-east wind uncovers stone chips and flakes used by the people of the dawn world as they feasted on shellfish. Wherever you go there are beaches untouched by progress, little bays where civilised man has left no mark - unless there is an empty wine bottle washed up on the sand.

In these waters are the shoals of *harders* and *maasbankers* which the cottage people catch in nets for salting and drying in the sun. Deep in the reeds fringing the water live the descendants of farm pigs that ran wild long ago. Among the scrub and bushes are the duiker and steenbok, pheasant and partridge, and that noisy bustard the *korhaan*. Often there are hares on the track, and once a lynx with pointed ears went loping brazenly in daylight before my car; a *rooikat*, killer of sheep, hated by all farmers.

Where the dunes end, fields of wheat begin, with scarlet poppies and Cape canaries eating their fill. And always there is that long sheet of water. In summer it wears a face of green, light and brilliant like a tourmaline, deep channels showing up plainly in darker green. Then I swim again and again, letting the sun into limbs smothered by city clothes. Or I may hide in the reeds and watch the sandpipers and listen to the terns crying "tchu-tchu" after their long migration from the Arctic.

It is timeless. On these shores a year is no more than a tick of the clock. But as I said, the summer is not the finest time. Everything on land dries right out. In the autumn, when the city is not warm enough for me, I often seek the dunes. Some years the autumn seems endless up there, no harsh winds disturb the water. Week after week you can lie naked under the sun without a shiver on tiny untrodden beaches sheltered by the cliffs.

I remember, too, a sudden end to that autumn glow. In the evening the clouds were massing, and at midnight the sky was filled with thunderclouds and forked lightning. Dawn was a new spectacle, a

red and menacing dawn with the sun rising amid clouds aflame. Then came the long rain that wheat farmers love.

Midwinter gives you many still days when the whitewashed cottages far away stand out in marvellous clarity against the young green wheat. On such days I wade along the edge of the water. A penguin is performing in the transparent shallows, a flightless bird flying at last in the only medium where the short flippers give it speed and grace. Sometimes the water is alive with little sand sharks. Drop a stone among them and they dart away like rockets. Spring in the Western Province and again I am thinking of my dune world beyond the seven gates. I would miss any other season rather than these magic weeks of spring.

Round every vlei are spring carpets of scarlet and mauve and golden flowers. White sheets of *tjienkerientjees*. Purple *vygies*, pink *statice* like paper flowers, *gazanias* and *ursineas*. I walk barefooted on soft seaweed, with the high tide almost reaching the bushes. Always I visit a natural pillar surrounded by water, a portion of a

cliff which has become detached by wind erosion. The cottage folk call it the *Preekstoel*. It stands up from the shallows like a stone exclamation mark, but it does also resemble a pulpit. Herons and wild pigeons nest in its crevices, secure from wild cats. On the summit grow daisies flushed with fawn, a tiny patch of colour where the wind has blown the seeds into a crumb of earth.

I remember the bluegum trees with their colonies of finches and the twisted old manitoka trees where the weaver-birds nest. But always the water dominates the scene, that arm of the sea flung out across the quiet land. As I walk in the shallows among the jelly-fish, the hermit crabs hurry over the mud in their borrowed dwellings. I climb above the beach to watch the cormorants driving a shoal of fish on shore, while a gang of ravenous seals hang on the outskirts and join at last in the massacre. Six pelicans are flying high overhead, escorted by a squadron of small gulls.

That is a corner of the Western Province which I have known since I was a boy, a corner which

will draw me back until I can drive no more. The dune world and the wheat, and the salt water like a living thing, shimmering under the moon, quivering and golden under the sun.

If hordes of quail arrive in October I shall remember an invitation to shoot on a Klipheuvel farm. These unpredictable and mysterious little game birds migrate from the north to nest in the ripening wheat, sometimes in great numbers. No one can tell me where they spend the rest of their time. In the wheat they lay ten or twelve brownish eggs. It is just as well that the clutches are large, for many are destroyed by the reapers.

I find quail shooting a difficult sport. The birds fly up in pairs like rockets with a loud "kwotkwok, kwotkwok", and the expert waits until they cross in flight and then bags both of them with one cartridge. I am content to drop one at a time. Then the search begins. You need a good dog to find a quail in the wheat. However, an experienced shot may secure four dozen quail

while treading down the wheat for two or three hours. I always wondered why the good-natured farmers allowed their wheat to be so roughly used, and once I asked my host whether it did much harm. "The straw recovers soon after you have walked over it," he replied. "But don't shoot low - that blows the ears off."

All being well, I shall enjoy my October quail on toast. Some people make a rich quail pie, with steak and mushrooms and hard-boiled eggs. I prefer my quail baked in the old Cape way, with young vine leaves and fat bacon round each breast.

December brings many delicacies, mebos among them. Long ago the children of the Boland had a song about mebos, and perhaps it is still heard when the dried and sugared apricots of the new season are eaten.

*Tant Siena kook stroop
Vir die meboskonfyt
Van die Wellingtonse suiker
Teen 'n trippens die Pond.*

Wellington is the mebos capital of the Cape, for it has both the apricots and the hot sunshine required to dry them. No doubt the old-fashioned mebos is still made on the farms; but the factory article does not seem to hold its own against the modern sweets. In my childhood, genuine mebos cost a penny for a satisfying piece. At five shillings a pound it is not so popular.

Mebos is a somewhat daring blend of flavours; sweet on the outside, salt and sour within. The traditional method is to soak the ripe apricots in salt water for a few hours, remove the skins and dry the fruit on mats in the sun. Next day the stones are pressed out by hand and the apricots are flattened. After four days in the sun the fruit is packed in sugar. If meboskonfyt is desired, the fruit is placed in jars with syrup, lime water or sugar and water.

Mrs. Dijkman, author of an early Cape cookery book, recommended mebos for lockjaw. Hildagonda Duckitt remarked in her famous book: "A very nice sweetmeat, and said to be good for seasickness." You may also remember the absurd

sermon preached by Olive Schreiner's character, the repulsive Bonaparte Blenkins, in which a child's greed for mebos had a fatal ending. South African literature has been enriched by mebos.

I know that it is a happy life in the Western Province for many, many people, but perhaps I have made it sound too easy. Certainly it was not always easy. Among my friends is a man of over seventy who grew up in the French Hoek district. He told me a tale of struggle, though always the sense of humour lightened the hardships he described.

Many farmers grew fruit and vegetables, and the problem was to reach the Cape Town market by cart on Monday mornings. That was the most profitable day. But how could this be done without violating the Sabbath?

"Times were hard, and farmers and predikant came to an understanding," recalled my friend. "During the fruit season, Sunday ended at six in the afternoon. At dusk the heavily-

loaded fruit carts were well out along the road to town. Baskets swung on poles through the cart springs. I still wonder how the driver kept going all through the night, perched on top of a colossal load. And I still remember how we started our homeward journey with an empty cart, a full purse and a ravenous appetite. At the Salt River outspan we bought grilled sausages, black coffee and huge chunks of *hop-brood*, the luscious white baker's bread that we never saw on the farm. Those were journeys to remember! "

Another friend, one of the most successful Western Province farmers I know, was cleaning his father's stables and driving a mule team when he was ten years old. They sold their oat hay at Maitland, their vegetables at Salt River. One day the boy complained about camping out in all weathers, but his father replied: "Better men than you have slept under a wagon." His father gave him another valuable piece of advice. "The only shares to buy are ploughshares and sheep

shears. If you want to gamble, then gamble on your land. But if you grow the right crop it will never be a gamble."

My friend followed that advice. He believes that the Western Province can produce some of the finest table-grapes in the world. "Give me a vineyard of twenty acres and I'll live like a fighting-cock," he declares. "No need to work too hard. The farmer can rely on a roof over his head and three meals a day. Search the world and you'll never find an easier country for the farmer than the old Western Province."

Such is my friend's belief. But this little boy who once slept under a wagon knows his costs to a fraction of a penny. And he remembers the days when he and his father were thankful to receive half-a-crown for a paraffin box of grapes; fifty or sixty pounds of grapes for half-a-crown.

In good times or bad, there is always one Western Province character who believes that the New Year will bring better luck than he has ever

known before. He is old Plaas Japie, and he is on the road to-night with all the other farm labourers, marching to the music of massed guitars, an orchestra such as only the New Year could bring forth. They are coming towards me, and I pull in to the side and stop the car, for I must not lose a word of song or note of music. Happily they all surge out of the darkness into the darkness.

*Eers uit die bottel en
dan uit die fles Tant Sofia!
Oom Jakkals die steek daar
'n doppie of ses Tant Sofia!*

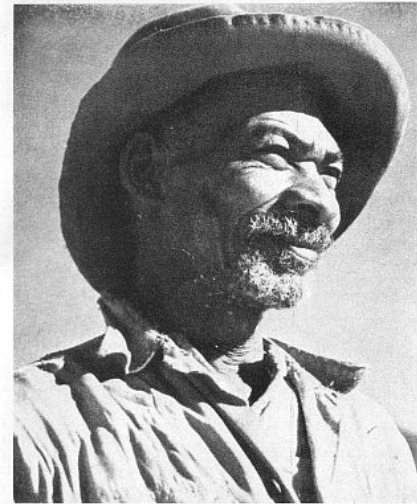
At last their happy song fades away, and only then do I start the motor again. These singers of the night have opened another door of the Western Province for me and made me feel the serene mood of this old, untroubled countryside. This is a night for memories. Here's to the happy Boland, the grand old Western Province! Drink to the land of oak and cannon, the land of wine and bread!

Oak and cannon! Van Riebeeck brought them with him, items of cargo which now distinguish the Western Province from other, younger districts. Nowhere else in South Africa will you find so many ancient oaks, such old cannon, each with its own story.

Simon van der Stel and his son Willem Adrian were the great oak planters of the Cape, but Van Riebeeck was the pioneer. Four years after arrival Van Riebeeck noted in his diary that the young oaks were flourishing. He laid out the first rows of oaks in his great vegetable garden along the route of the present Avenue; and no doubt he tried a few acorns on his own estates at Uitkyk (now Observatory) and the farm where Bishopscourt now stands.

Then came Simon van der Stel, planting trees on such a grand scale that within eight years nearly five thousand oaks were bearing acorns in the Cape and Stellenbosch districts, while fifty thousand young oaks were in his nurseries ready for sending out to farmers and landdrosts. Rustenberg (near Rondebosch) was his main nursery, and Constantia

was planted with oaks at this period. Every farmer had to plant one hundred trees a year. They grumbled, of course, and declared that the trees sheltered birds which ate their grain; but the governor saw that they obeyed his orders.



"In good times or bad there is always one Western Province character who believes that the New Year will bring better luck than he has ever known before. He is old Pinas Japie . . ."

Simon van der Stel drew up a technique for oak planting which his son followed. Both of them realised that shelter from the south-easters were essential. Simon van der Stel planted sixteen thousand "young and tender trees of the thickness of a finger" in good black soil above Groote Schuur and beyond. During the first two or three years, but never afterwards, some of the trees were damaged by the baboons jumping on the branches and snapping them. However, about ten thousand of the trees were growing luxuriantly ten years after planting. Most of them had reached a height of thirty-six feet, with a diameter of seven or eight inches near the ground.

Willem Adrian planted a further ten thousand oaks in the Cape Peninsula before the end of the seventeenth century, mainly in the present Newlands area. He also sent a large supply of young oaks to Stellenbosch, and instructed the landdrost to plant them in the streets. Later governors were not so energetic, though Willem Adrian's successor did issue a placaat making it an offence to damage trees on public property. The

penalty was a sound flogging at the foot of the gallows.

Where is the oldest oak in the Cape to be found? Possibly the oak that still lives beside the La Cotte homestead close to French Hoek. According to family legend, the Huguenot who settled there in 1694, Jean Gardiol, brought the acorn from France with him. The tradition appears to be well-founded. Someone took an acorn from the La Cotte tree back to France many years ago. It was planted in Paris, and a handsome tree grew up there.

If there is an older oak in Eikestad (Oak Town, nickname for Stellenbosch) there is no record of it. A few of the original oaks may have survived, there and at Paarl. Lady Anne Barnard found the oaks at their best when she visited Stellenbosch, which she described as "built in long streets, perfectly regular, each street having on each side a row of large oaks which shadow the tops of the houses, keeping them cool, and forming a shady avenue between, through which the sun cannot pierce." She sketched the Drostdy, showing two oaks planted in Simon van der Stel's time.

The traveller Barrow, dealing with the Stellenbosch oaks a few years after Lady Anne's visit, compared them with the largest elms in Hyde Park. "Yet a few years ago," Barrow added, "the most beautiful of these trees were rooted out in order to raise a paltry sum of money towards the exigencies of the parish. I saw at least half a hundred of these venerable ruins lying in the streets." Nowadays old oaks are cut down only when they become a danger to the public. Stellenbosch, indeed, has one street of oaks, the Dorp Street oaks running from the parsonage to the railway crossing, which have been specially protected by the Historical Monuments Commission.

Paarl said farewell shortly after World War II to an oak planted in the main street in 1824 by Mr. J. J. Luttig, *koster* of the Dutch Reformed Church. This magnificent tree reached a height of more than one hundred feet. When it rotted and was sawn off, the municipality provided a brass plaque giving the history of the tree.

Many old towns and villages in the Cape hold a municipal acorn sale every autumn. It is attended by Coloured people, who bid for the right to collect acorns in the different streets. Ceres has been auctioning its acorn crop for the past sixty years and the acorn gatherers pay hundreds of pounds every year into the municipal coffers. The work is done by the same families year after year; or rather by the children of these families. Farmers pay ten shillings a bag of acorns, and at this rate a Coloured child may earn two pounds a week.

Many farm animals eat acorns with relish. Pigs which have too many acorns in their diet, however, are liable to yield a low grade, bluish, oily bacon. Human acorn eaters are not unknown in the Cape; and indeed it is possible to remove most of the tannic acid by pounding and standing the acorn meal in water. In times of great distress, "acorn coffee" is brewed. Shell the dry acorns, cut them up small, boil to remove the tannic acid, dry them again, roast and pound. This beverage is said to have a better flavour

than mealie coffee. I can only hope that I am never reduced to drinking either of these substitutes, though I have an idea that something of the sort has been given to me in disguise in certain hotels.

Oak-lined streets are an inspiration and also, at times, a curse. It was not so bad in the days of thatch, but acorn-dropping time in a tin-roofed village is something to remember, especially when you are trying to sleep. And the housewife who has to have the choked gutters cleared and sweep up the leaves in the long moulting season has no inclination to bless the name of Simon van der Stel. A retired farmer, living in Ceres, went to the Supreme Court some years ago in an endeavour to force the municipality to cut down three oaks which, he said, "were damaging his property. He pointed out that the leaves were blocking the gutters, causing the rainwater to overflow and thus affecting the walls with damp.

The judge ordered the municipality to trim the branches of the oaks overhanging the house, but he refused to order the destruction of the trees. "From the time of Van der Stel, oak trees have been one of the glories of the Cape and the Western Province generally," declared the judge. "It is not too much to say that the oaks are one of the finest features of Ceres, and I regard them as a great asset."

I can only think of one serious charge against that majestic foreigner, the oak. With it there came to the Cape a deadly fungus called the "death cup" (*Amanita phalloides*). If you gather mushrooms you must first learn to recognise a "death cup" by its white gills and bulbous base. It is nearly always found beneath oaks.

If you are a collector of cannon, there can be few more satisfying places in the world than Cape Town and the Western Province. Some years ago the island of St. Helena might have offered more types of cannon in a smaller

area, but nearly all of them were shipped to England in World War II as scrap metal. Now the Cape remains as one of the great cannon graveyards.

You meet them soon after landing in the old part of Table Bay Docks, iron cannon with muzzles cemented into the wharves, serving as bollards. Many have been recovered by dredgers from known and unknown wrecks in the mud of Table Bay. (I was on board the Italian salvage vessel *Arpione* when her grab brought up two barnacle-covered cannon from the *Haarlem*, a Dutch East India ship lost in 1728 off the Salt River mouth.) But there is no need to go diving after cannon. Cape Town was ringed in for centuries by forts and batteries; the Amsterdam battery, the Chavonnes, the French Lines, Houd den Bul, Keert de Koe, Sluysken at Hout Bay, Van Imhoff below the Castle and many more.

Heavy old cannon with piles of cannon balls still remain outside derelict blockhouses on the Table Mountain slopes. Two shapely

English cannon, painted white, stand upright opposite the Castle gateway to show the entrance to the Parade. A former racecourse on Green Point Common was marked out with cannon. Surveyors in Queen Victoria's day, delimiting the boundaries of Cape Town and its suburbs, planted cannon in the pavements to act as beacons.

I once met an old man who collected cannon in his own way. He had no room for them in or round his house, but he had a map of Cape Town and he marked on it every cannon he could find. One he located on the Green Point golf course, and two in the grounds of the Sea Point public library. A factory in Sir Lowry Road had two cannon outside its front entrance. Often the workmen digging up the streets unearthed cannon when mending drains or laying pipes. My friend the cannon collector marked the spots on his map. And he gave me one tip which I pass on to the cannon collectors of the future. "If you are searching for cannon which have belonged to an old

fort, never look above the fort," he advised. "Cannon were always rolled downhill."

Simonstown is a sanctuary for old cannon. Trafalgar Park at Woodstock has a kiln where cannon balls were heated before loading. Robben Island, besides its modern guns, has a number of old cannon. But the only gun that everyone in Cape Town knows is the twelve o'clock gun. It is fitting that this city of cannon should check its timepieces by the flash and boom of an old fashioned, smooth-bore muzzle-loader, loaded with black powder and fired every day from Signal Hill.

Cannon were used for signalling in the early days of the Cape settlement and long afterwards. On a large scale map of the Western Province you can trace the old signal routes running inland by such names as Kanonkop and Kanonberg. Some of the old cannon still lie rusting on the hilltops where they were hauled two centuries and more ago. Legends have grown up round those alarm guns, and many true adventure tales are told.

Most of them have been set up in the nearest town, in the positions of honour which they deserve.

The first signal cannon was placed at De Schuur, now Groote Schuur, the prime minister's residence, and other relay stations were set up at Salt River, Rondebosch, Koeberg and the Tygerberg hills. One line of communication ran in the direction of Stellenbosch, and a cannon was hauled up to the highest point on Paarl mountain at the same period. The system grew with the colony during the eighteenth century, and posts were established as far away as Piketberg, the Cedarberg, Tulbagh and Swellendam. In the early days one gun meant that a ship in need of fresh provisions had anchored in Table Bay, so that farmers knew their produce would be in demand. Two guns formed a signal the farmers dared not disobey. It warned them of the approach of an enemy. Every burgher had to mount his horse and ride to the meeting-place, bringing with him his gun, powder, rounds of ball and rations for several days.

Later a more elaborate system of signals was adopted. Each cannon had a flagpole beside it. When a fleet of friendly ships approached Table Bay a gun was fired for each vessel sighted. Hostile ships were reported by flags as well as guns, and beacon fires were lit at night.

Riebeek Kasteel was the farthest outpost of the Dutch colony early in the eighteenth century. It was present in 1934 when the old signal cannon was brought from the summit of Riebeek Kasteel mountain and placed in the village square. This cannon had in its day told not only the good news of the arrival of friendly ships in Table Bay; it had also boomed its warning when Hottentots rose and descended on the farmers to pillage and kill. Burghers and militia would then saddle up and ride to the aid of the threatened families.

Once the response to the distress signal came too late. Gerrit Cloete, in 1701, sent a man up the mountain to fire the cannon, for word had reached him that Hottentot raiders were on the way. Before help arrived, Cloete's cattle had been driven off; his store ransacked and his home set

alight. After the Hottentots had been punished, Cloete returned to his desolate farm and renamed it "Alles Verloren" (Everything Lost). On that farm in 1874 a boy was born, Daniel Francois Malan, to become in due course prime minister of the country.

One famous alarm, when every signal cannon in the colony was fired, was caused by the arrival in June 1795 of Elphinstone's fleet in False Bay. The guns were heard again in January 1806, when Baird and Popham landed nearly seven thousand men. By that time the line of guns ran to Swellendam, nearly two hundred miles away. Janssens, the Dutch general, had sent an officer along this line to instruct each *veldkornet* and see that the system would work efficiently. The officer placed the guns more closely and fired test shots. When the invasion came, the news was known in Swellendam within eight hours. That may not seem very fast, but it must be remembered that each gunner had to climb a koppie before he could pass on the signal.

Paarl's seventeenth century cannon lay rusting on the peak called Kanonkop until 1867, when Prince Alfred visited the Cape for the second time. Prince Alfred was to be entertained on the heights of Paarl Rock, and an enterprising farmer named Voigt suggested moving the cannon to a place near the picnic spot and firing a salute. The magistrate agreed, convicts and oxen did the work, and that is how the old cannon came to rest on its present site on Paarl Rock. According to old newspaper reports, hundreds of colonists escorted Prince Alfred up the mountain. On the summit the Prince's flag was "broken", the old gun went off and the band played "God Save the Queen". Then came the wine and grilled chops. Thirty years later the old gun was heard again in honour of Queen Victoria's Jubilee.

When the Paarl gun was used in 1902 to mark the end of the South African War, there was a misfire. Mr. P. Kooy of Paarl, a spectator, moved in front of the gun to watch the

procedure and received the charge in his face. He lost an eye.

Some people, on seeing a cannon, are tempted to fire it. But it is not always safe to monkey with these ancient pieces, and lack of gunpowder must have saved many an amateur gunner from disaster. Even an experienced gunner may come to grief. Montagu, that pleasant town of wine and fruit, had a signal cannon on Kanonkop to the north of the village. This was fired on Queen Victoria's birthday and other State occasions last century. One day the gunner, a local character known as Jackie, blew off both his arms. In spite of the poor medical remedies available he recovered. The gun was moved to the west of the kloof, where it was fired occasionally; but after Jackie's accident they laid a long train and took cover. It burst at last without injuring anyone.

Probably the oldest signal cannon outside Cape Town is the two-tonner mounted outside the Parow municipal office. This was brought

down from the farm Van Riebeeck's Hof a few years ago. A document bearing the 1690 date mentions this cannon. Within sound of this cannon was another on a steep hill near the present village of Durbanville; the Kanonkop which is usually clouded in winter when rain is imminent. Kanonkop was the scene of a tragedy towards the end of the eighteenth century, for Petrus Lambrechts, the gunner, was murdered there by a native.

Durbanville has another cannon, in the garden of Mr. Ben Conradie's house. Mr. Conradie always wanted to be a cannon owner. One day he was in the Divisional Council's store at Vasco when his eye lighted on a cannon bearing the VOC mark of the Dutch East India Company and the date 1652, the very year Van Riebeeck landed. He applied for the cannon and was informed that he could have it if he made himself responsible for the removal. This was a problem, for it weighed well over two thousand pounds and cartage contractors refused to handle it. However, Mr.

Conradie and a few friends brought a block and tackle and a lorry on the scene, and at last the cannon was placed where he wanted it. But it is a mysterious cannon, a gun with a story which everyone seems to have forgotten.

So there is an artillery museum in the Western Province ... brass culverins green with verdigris, iron muzzle-loaders with wooden tampions, small calibre brass guns with ships' names inscribed on them; the cannon used by General Janssens at the Battle of Blaauwberg, abandoned when he retreated and buried under the dunes; lean and delicate falconets on swivel carriages; quarter-deck guns that once fired salutes and bombards that blew condemned men from their muzzles; guns cast a century ago and guns that go all the way back to Van Riebeeck and to the Portuguese explorers long before Van Riebeeck.

One relic that has always fascinated me is a small bronze signalling cannon bearing a Portuguese coat-of-arms and two dolphins in relief. It was found in a Bushman cave near

Tulbagh, many miles inland. Long ago a little band of wild Bushmen must have been scouring the beaches for shellfish when they came upon this relic of a lost ship. Bushmen had no trek oxen. They could not have dreamt of firing the gun. I imagine that it was the sheer beauty of the decorated metal which impelled the little people to drag that heavy cannon all the way to their lair in the distant mountains.

CHAPTER 2

ONE LONG MAIN STREET

*Pollie ons gaan Pêrel toe,
Pêrel toe, Pêrel toe,
Pollie ons gaan Pêrel toe,
daar onder by the Kaap.*
-Afrikaans picnic song.

Paarl is my favourite country town. Not because it is the largest and richest inland town in the Western Province. Not only because of its remarkable granite rocks and other scenery. Not even because of its famous Main Street, once

seven miles in length and now almost ten; though I always find this street fascinating.

For me, the charm of Paarl rests on a boyhood memory. Paarl showed me a gateway to adventure, the romance of the road. Several years before World War I, I joined a party which visited Retief, De Ville and Company of Noorder Paarl, the wagon-builders. This flourishing trade formed one of the great sights of Paarl, and I am thankful because I saw it at a boom period when no one imagined that the wagon was doomed to vanish like the sailing-ship.

Retief and De Ville had been in business for more than half a century when I gazed in wonder on their workshops. For some reason the Paarl builders never attempted to design mail-coaches; these were all imported from the United States. But you could see almost every other type of road vehicle at the Paarl factories.

They made spiders and phaetons "suitable for our rough roads", according to the 1910 catalogue of Retief and De Ville. Doctors could

buy a two-wheeler "doctor's gig" or a four-wheeler called the "Doctor's Comfort", specially built for trying climates, with glass windows in the doors. Their buggies went by such names as "The Runaway", "The Sailor", "The Sultan" and "The Dandy". Another buggy called "The Frenchman" was described as "one of the prettiest and most fashionable buggies of the day, greatly admired by everybody". One of their Cape carts was named "The Admiral", while their Scotch cart was naturally "The Scotchman". A wagonette called "The Judge" had a partition separating the driver from his distinguished passenger.

I saw an ambulance wagon with folding bunks; mule wagons and fruit wagons; the "Koeberger" wagon for wheat farmers; the "Zand Velder" for use in the dune country; and the celebrated "Voortrekker", a heavy full-tented transport wagon with stinkwood rails and strong axles. Out of the corner of my eye I observed a fearsome, black-painted, old-fashioned hearse with carved wooden canopies. But the wagon that captured

my young imagination and held me spellbound was called the "Travelling Home". Though I had felt the itch of adventure, I also appreciated a little comfort. This veritable ship of the veld seemed to offer a happy combination of the two. The firm had supplied wagons of this elaborate design to Earl Grey, Cecil Rhodes, and many land surveyors. It could be drawn by mules or oxen. The wagon contained a bedroom and separate living room equipped with side-bags, gun-racks, folding stools and chairs, water and meat barrels, windows, curtains, hat-pegs and lamps. It was six feet wide inside. Seats were cushioned and there were chests and side-boxes with drawers. I would have been ready to travel a long way in a wagon like that. It lingered in my mind and made a special appeal to me. Even now I would give you all the "space ships" in exchange for that wagon, and enjoy my journey more - and in greater safety. But I have never been cursed by ambition.

Paarl's wagon trade had its origin in a number of one-man workshops where the old craftsmen specialised in repairs. Then they began making

wheels and harness, woodwork and axles. *Droëriem* was the quarter of Paarl where every backyard was devoted to some form of wagon-building. It is now Oranje Straat, and it would be hard to find a trace of the great trade among the dwelling-houses. They called it Droëriem because it was as dry as a riem on the mountain slope, without a water-tap anywhere. Oranje Straat was kept so busy, however, that it was nicknamed "Business Street". A sort of production line was in operation, vehicles moving along from one craftsman to another; from carpenter to wheelwright to the blacksmith who would shrink on the iron tyres; then to the upholsterer and at last to the painter.

Malays were among the best workers, the Moerats and Kiampies and other families. They worked from sunrise to sunset. In the blacksmiths' shops they anticipated the modern idea of music at work. Mouth-organs and concertinas were often heard with the sounds of furnace and anvil.

Paarl was making wagons by hand early last century. I believe the first "wagon king" was a Mr.

John du Plessis, who employed slave labour. Towards the end of last century came steam and machines, and the trade passed out of the hands of small craftsmen into the factories. Besides the firm of Retief and De Ville which I have mentioned, other famous names in the trade were the Wahls, the Brinks, G. C. van Ellewee, Bonthuys, Thom, Havenga, Rester, Jan Phillips and many more. Wheeler, and Zuidmeer were farriers. The Baartmans were blacksmiths, and members of the Marais family were harness-makers.

In slack times the clever speculators known as *toggangers* would drive out of Paarl with cavalcades of carts and wagons. These expeditions were usually drawn by mules, and the carts were equipped with short, rough, temporary shafts to make the "train" easier to control. Only when a bargain was clinched were the proper shafts fitted.

The *toggangers* trekked all the way to the Orange Free State and Transvaal to carry on their barter trade. Slaughter oxen, young horses, mules and sheep were accepted. Livestock was driven across country to the nearest railway station. Then the

togganger informed his auctioneer by telegram when he expected to reach Klapmuts, the great centre for stock sales. In the early days of photography one shrewd *togganger* always took a camera with him. Many a profitable deal was put through when he undertook to supply portraits of remote families.

After the railway was built to the north, whole trains would leave Huguenot Station for Rhodesia or Johannesburg loaded with wagons. In a good year, Paarl would send away three thousand wagons and carts.

Thus the wagon kings prospered. Every war and mineral discovery helped the trade. Some grew rich on the demand from Kimberley and the Rand; and early this century the Germans sent to Paarl for wagons to carry on their campaign against Herero and Hottentot. Right up to 1914 the factories were going at full blast.

Not long after World War I came the decline. It was not a sudden crash, like the ostrich feather collapse, but the slow replacement of Cape carts

by motor-cars, wagons by motor-lorries. Fabriek Straat, which had rung with the sound of hammer and anvil and saw, turned over to the motor business. It was one of the great transformations of this century; one which old people must deplore; the passing of the horse and the wooden wheel; the coming of speed with its advantages and also its dangers. One determined wagon-builder was still at work in Paarl not long before World War II, for the old industry was a long time dying. At that time, too, I looked over a smart trailer caravan in one of the old wagon-yards. It was a neat, luxurious job. But I remembered the "Traveling Home" with its gun-racks which I had seen as a small boy. I heard the rumble of wagon wheels, and with that sound there came another, and I heard the drums of Time.

Paarl is a town which does not know its own age. It grew up so gradually that it is impossible to find an exact date of origin for the village. But the discovery is an open book,

thanks to the Van Riebeeck diary. Five years had passed since the landing, a large fleet was expected, and as usual the Cape settlement was short of meat. Hottentot clans were inland with the cattle, for it was October and they were in search of grazing.

Abraham Gabbema and others were sent off with pack-oxen, pistols and firelocks, trade goods such as copper, tobacco and pipes, and provisions for a fortnight. They were to find the Hottentots and bring back sheep and cattle. The ambitious Commander also instructed them to keep a sharp lookout for such other desirable items as gold and amber and ivory, and civet for making perfumes. Pieter Potter the surveyor was to map the unknown country.

It was a happy time for the explorers. No one was killed or injured in spite of encounters with lions and a rhino. They caught barbell in the Berg River and shot buck for the pot. Passing over the present site of Paarl they often stood gazing at the granite domes on the

mountain, flashing like gems under the sun after the rain And so they gave the rocks the names which have clung to them "Diamandt ende Peerl bergh" in Van Riebeeck's old-fashioned Dutch. Cows, calves and sheep were secured from the Hottentots, and no doubt Gabbema earned a pat on the back from the Commander.

If you look up the full report of Gabbema's expedition in the Van Riebeeck diary you will see that the men found the tracks and droppings of an animal they had heard about, but never seen. It was the mountain zebra. Sergeant Jan van Hawarden, who led another Berg River expedition the following year, was the first white explorer to see these splendid creatures in the flesh. "They were very shy of human beings, and it was obvious that on account of their wildness it would hardly be possible to procure or capture them," Hawarden reported.

Another band of men from the Castle visited the Hottentots in the Paarl area eight years later and

became involved in a fight. Kees, the Hottentot chief, was killed, one hundred and sixty head of cattle were seized, and the Hottentots asked for peace. It was not until 1687, however, that the first white farmers settled in the Berg River valley. They were Hollanders bound for the East Indies; but these emigrants were so enchanted by the Cape scenery and prospects that they asked permission to stay. Simon van der Stel granted twenty-three married men farms along the Berg, and each sixty morgen farm had a river frontage.

The first Huguenots arrived during the following year. They, too, travelled up the mountain from Stellenbosch, rested on the nek now known as Helshoogte, and looked down into the wild land of Drakenstein which was to become their home. They were poor refugees, but the Governor lent them wagons and oxen. Farms were granted free on condition that one-tenth of the produce went to the Company.

Thus the grand old French names began to appear on Cape maps which had hitherto known Hottentot and Portuguese and Dutch landmarks. It

is a queer thing that most of the Huguenot farm names have come through the centuries unchanged, whereas the Huguenots themselves allowed their Dutch neighbours to twist their surnames out of recognition. Among the Paarl farms given to the Huguenot pioneers were La Borie (Jean Taillefer), Picardie (Isaac Taillefer), La Concordia (Gabriel le Roux) and Nantes (Louis Cordier). One farm with a Dutch name, De Goede Hoop, was granted to Jean Cloudon.

Dutch emigrants arrived during 1688, and they were settled among the Huguenots at Paarl. It appears that Simon van der Stel was aiming at rapid absorption; he did not want a foreign colony at the Cape. Half a century later the French language was used in church for the last time. Within a century French had died out completely.

Paarl, as a farming area, spread out along both banks of the Berg River early in the eighteenth century. At this period, however, there was still no sign of a village. Paarl had planned tercentenary celebrations for 1957, but the historians pointed out that it was much too early. Not until

1717 was a five-morgen site surveyed for a church to take the place of one at Drakenstein which had fallen into ruins. The church was built three years later, and some time after that houses grew up round the church and Paarl became a village.

A very slow growth it was all through the eighteenth century. In fact, when Captain Perceval, a British visitor, visited Paarl in 1800 he found only thirty houses. A turf club was organised some years later. ("All dogs found on the course will be killed.") This was the ground now used for jukskei contests.

Paarl's first disaster was the rainstorm of July 1822. As you can imagine, the oldest inhabitants could not remember anything like it. Twenty buildings and many vineyards were destroyed. Other centres also suffered heavily, roads and bridges were washed away, and Lord Charles Somerset had to write to England proposing a loan of £100,000 for the colony.

One interesting Paarl pathway of the old days which is hard to trace now is the almost-forgotten Buurmanslaan (Neighbours'-lane) which linked the farm homesteads along the foot of the mountain. It started at De Hoop (formerly De Goede Hoop, home of Jean Mesnard whose descendants became Minaars) and ran for seven miles through Pontak and Armoedskraal to Roodehoogte, the present Kloof Street. You may still trace Buurmanslaan by the oaks which stand before each homestead. The old farmers trod out that path to avoid going all the way down to the main street and then up the neighbour's farm track. Buurmanslaan was the short cut. At night a slave with a lantern would lead the way.

Mrs. Eyre, "a respectable widow", announced in 1828 that she had opened her house "for the reception of genteel families". That was Paarl's first boarding-house. The first post wagon service between Paarl and Cape Town started three years later, running once a week in each direction.

When H.M.S. Beagle called at the Cape in 1836 a young naturalist hired horses and a Hottentot

groom as guide and set off into the country. He was Charles Darwin. No doubt the girls turned to look at him as he rode into Paarl, little dreaming that he would one day publish a theory that would startle the world. Darwin liked Paarl. He admired the June flowers and heaths along the road. On arrival he climbed the mountain at once and gazed across the valley. It reminded him that some naturalist had said that hippos could only live among luxuriant vegetation; but Darwin noted that here was a valley without forests, and hippos still survived down the river. In the village Darwin noted: "There was not a single hovel. The whole village possessed an air of quiet and respectable comfort."

A magistrate was sent to Paarl in 1839, and the town became a municipality the following year. The councillors made it illegal to smoke pipes without lids in the street, and kite flying was forbidden in the village. All shops had to close at dusk.

This was an unhappy period of insolvencies. One "Government Gazette" notice dealt with the

affairs of a Mr. Waldpot, wagon-maker of "The Village of the Paarl Diamant". His erf, inappropriately named Fortuintje, was offered to the highest bidder. He lost his ground, his vines and fruit trees, oaks and firs, teak fermenting tubs and a brandy still.

The opening of the Lady Grey Bridge over the Berg River in 1857 caused excitement throughout the Paarl district. South Africa had never known such a bridge. Three thousand people could stand on it at once. Among the troops were the Paarl Rifles in their new uniforms; the Cape Royal Rifles and cavalry units from Durbanville and Stellenbosch. After the bridge ceremony there was a "select tiffin" for important guests and a grand picnic which anyone "neatly and respectably attired" might attend.

Prince Alfred was at Paarl a few years later. Mr. J. S. de Villiers, a Paarl musician, composed "Prince Alfred's Gallop" in honour of the event. A newspaper correspondent gave this impression of the visit: "The Paarl, to which the cavalcade

were now fast approaching, is about the most quaint, picturesque, peculiar and interesting town in South Africa. The solitary street is lined with noble avenues of pine and oak, furnishing the most grateful shade from the heat, which otherwise would prove insupportable. The houses, all detached from each other, are as scrupulously clean and white as paint and lime can make them, and most of them are surrounded with their orchards and vineyards extending down the gentle slope to the clear, rapid stream of the Berg River. The architecture is strictly Dutch and thoroughly antique."

Paarl had more than three hundred houses at that time. A Cape Town journalist remarked sadly: "The only dissipation is the fondness for horses." It was a great place for training colts with a view to profitable sales. The journalist declared that time meant no more to a Paarlite than to a Laplander. It seemed incredible that anything could disturb the peace; but the Paarl volunteers were at loggerheads with their colonel, a martinet who was also magistrate. They decided to hold a

meeting and disband the corps. However, the colonel had the last word. He declared the meeting illegal.

Strong characters have always flourished at Paarl. When the railway reached Paarl in 1863 there was a Sunday train service. This aroused the indignation of the Rev. G. W. A. van der Lingen, the Dutch Reformed Church minister at Paarl, later to become prominent in the *moedertaal* struggle. The minister and others organised a boycott of the new railway, and then started an opposition service, an omnibus which ran between Paarl and Cape Town every day except Sunday, starting at five in the morning and returning the same day. "Van der Lingen's bus," as the Paarl people called it, was a most successful enterprise. It cost only six shillings single compared with eight shillings by rail, and it was well-supported and ran for several years. In the end, the Sunday trains were withdrawn.

If you missed the mail with an important letter in those days it was customary to employ a private runner. There were swift coloured men who

would undertake the journey to Cape Town for one shilling and sixpence.

When I was a young reporter in the early nineteen-twenties I was sent to interview Mr. C. C. de Villiers, at that time the oldest attorney on the Roll. Charles Christian de Villiers remembered Paarl in the middle of last century. He was one of a family of nine. Charles was only six when his father died, and he lost his mother a few years later. Thus a youth became the head of the family, while the eldest girl mothered the little ones. They remained in the old home with its large garden, and an uncle who lived opposite kept a fatherly eye on the family. Among the orphans was the John Henry de Villiers who became the first Lord de Villiers, Chief Justice of the Union.

Mr. C. C. de Villiers told me that the magistrate of Paarl in his youth was a Mr. K. N. van Breda, who was entirely without legal training or experience. Mr. Rawson, the Colonial Secretary, wanted a man for the post and had persuaded Kenny van Breda to take it. Van Breda pointed

out that he knew nothing of the law. "Bother the law," exclaimed Rawson. "Law is common-sense."

The arrangement worked fairly well, though Van Breda sometimes revealed his ignorance. Once a lawyer was quoting from the famous "Law Book of Van der Linden", and the magistrate thought he was referring to the Rev. G. W. A. van der Lingen. "With all due respect to Mr. van der Lingen, I cannot allow you to quote him as an authority in my court," ruled the magistrate firmly.

On another occasion Mr. van Breda had before him a coloured man who had beaten his wife. "There may be occasions when you are justified in punishing your wife," summed up this unpredictable magistrate. "In this case the punishment was too severe. You will receive ten cuts with the cane."

Mr. de Villiers also recalled a Paarl lawsuit in which everyone concerned was named De Villiers. A Mr. de Villiers, as executor in the

estate of a De Villiers, instructed Mr. C. C. de Villiers to sue a debtor named De Villiers. The deputy sheriff who served the summons was a De Villiers, the barrister was a De Villiers and the judge was Henry de Villiers.

They say that if you collide with someone in the dark in Paarl you will be all right if you say: "Sorry, Mr. de Villiers." Paarl is the ancestral home of this great family. And a member who cannot be overlooked is Mr. Septimus ("Oom Seppie") de Villiers, born in 1867, and now one of the few surviving members of the old Cape Parliament. At thirty he became Paarl's youngest mayor, and he retained the chair for seventeen years in succession. "Oom Seppie" helped to do away with oil lamps and install electric light. He persuaded the ratepayers that it was unhealthy to empty kitchen slops into open sluits. It took him four years to convince the post office authorities that Paarl deserved a telephone exchange; he had to go out in 1905 and find sixty subscribers himself before the exchange was established. You will find a vivid portrait of "Oom Seppie" (with

his long, flowing Victorian moustache) by Neville Lewis in the Paarl Divisional Council chamber.

Paarl is the home of the Afrikaans language. The pioneers who struggled from 1872 onwards to replace Nederlands with Afrikaans were Paarl men; and the first Afrikaans newspapers were published there. Paarl Afrikaans is regarded by some as the standard, the equivalent of the Queen's English.

Paarl was a siesta town in the leisurely days of last century. A writer named Walter Derham declared that Paarl storekeepers rose at half past four in the morning, had their coffee and opened their shops. Dinner was at noon, and then everyone slept until four in the afternoon. Two more hours' work followed. Bedtime was at nine.

During the depression of the eighteen-eighties it was said that Paarl only came to life on Sundays, for then the farmers drove in to church and the long street woke up. On weekdays it was deserted. One large shop took three shillings in a

day. No wonder hundreds of people left Paarl to try their luck on the Millwood goldfields.

Nevertheless the Paarl farmers held agricultural shows in the eighteen-seventies. No show ground was necessary. The cattle were tethered to the oaks in Faure Street, and there was so little traffic that judges and exhibitors could use the streets without being disturbed.

Paarl recovered and grew rich as its vineyards and orchards brought in millions of pounds. Where else in the world will you find ninety farms within one municipal boundary? More than twenty of these farms still run down to the main street. In spite of modern factories and new industries, however, the beauty of Paarl has never been spoilt. The scene which the Huguenots knew when they first entered this valley "with the Bible in one hand and the vine in the other" has been transformed; yet this is the finest landscape in the Western Province still.

But where else will you find a band of women who are so proud of their town that they go up

and down the streets with spades planting flowers and keeping up gardens in public squares and hospital grounds? They have been doing this since 1931; and four years later the Paarl Beautifying Society (as they are called) started the wild flower reserve on the mountain. Within the fifteen acres of the reserve you will see young stinkwood and yellowwood trees, proteas and disas, silver trees and succulents.



"Paarl recovered and grew rich as its vineyards and orchards brought in millions of pounds. Where else in the world will you find ninety farms within one municipal boundary?"

Huguenot, the suburb of Paarl, is a fairly new growth. Old people remember it as the farm

Ambach's Vlei, owned at one time by Dr. Zeederberg and then by Mr. Isaac Jacob de Villiers. It was a palmiet jungle in the seventies of last century, and the primitive bridge vanished under water when a tributary of the Berg was in flood. The last hippo had not yet been shot.

Mr. Isaac de Villiers cleared the bush and laid out vineyards and orchards. Among the workers on the farm were two former slaves who remained with the family until they died. Once the old farmhouse (which still stands) was flooded during the winter rains. An hotel had been built by this time, and the De Villiers family and friends struggled through the water to shelter and hot coffee. Wine firms bought plots, houses were built, the village of Huguenot took shape. Orchards planted by Mr. de Villiers have disappeared, but some of his oaks are still there. His name, too, remains in the section of Huguenot called Villieria, while Elizabeth and Johanna streets were named after his daughters.

At first Huguenot station was known as Lady Grey Bridge station. It is now one of the most beautiful stations in South Africa. One stationmaster, a keen

gardener, hung on there year after year, refusing all offers of promotion, so that he could tend his palms and hedges, fruit trees and rockeries of succulents. Train passengers love to stretch their legs on this gorgeous platform.

CHAPTER 3

TREASURES OF THE HUGUENOTS

If you love turning over dusty papers and opening long-forgotten boxes in the lofts of old, gabled houses then you are a *snuffelaar*. I am a *snuffelaar*. Mr. A. J. Hugo, curator of the Huguenot Museum at Paarl, is a celebrated *snuffelaar*, and he told me the story of Jan Bernardi's loft.

Tell a Paarl humorist that you have looked everywhere for some odd item and failed to lay hands on it, and he will probably say: "*Gaan soek op Jan Bernardi se solder.*" (Go and search Jan Bernardi's loft.) Bernardi was a shopkeeper who lived in Main Street years ago. The house bears the date 1784 on the gable. It is a grand survivor of the old architecture, the sort of place where you

might expect to discover valuable relics and antiques. Bernardi, however, was a notoriously reckless buyer, especially at sales. All the rubbish which he could not sell went into his loft.

One day in 1931 Mr. Hugo was given the key of this legendary loft. He found no treasure with a high cash value; but he made a discovery which took his mind back for more than a century. A kist bearing the VOC mark of the Dutch East India Company stood among the relics of the years, and he opened it. There was a will dated 1819, made by one Wolfaardt, and signed by nine witnesses. Wolfaardt was not a rich man, however, for he left only about a hundred rix-dollars, a feather mattress and blankets, and some items of clothing. The clothes were in the kist, mainly night-caps and dressing-gowns, and this legacy has now found its way to the Huguenot Museum.

Then Mr. Hugo ferreted out a letter from someone in the Dutch East Indies to Jan Bernardi, written in Nederlands early last century. Bernardi's friend had sent him a consignment of Chinese ginger, and the friend

advised him to look out for a box with a special mark on it. Mr. Hugo identified the box at once, and inside were the Chinese stone jars - empty. The jars also went to the museum.

Many valuable heirlooms from Paarl homes and all the old Huguenot districts have found their way to this museum as gifts or by purchase. The former pastorie of the Noorder Paarl Church makes a magnificent background for the exhibits. Here, as you would expect, are grand specimens of stinkwood wardrobes, tables and chairs. You will find an eighteenth century oak dower chest; a piano made in Hamburg in 1780 and still possessing a good tone; a very old barrel organ; a purser's box from a Dutch ship; and Dr. Andrew Murray's bedside table. Show-cases display fine silver, jugs and candlesticks, and Nankin willow-pattern dishes. A leather bound, copper-mounted Bible was printed in 1657, and this contains notes on events in Paarl early last century.

Paarl's leading family, the clan De Villiers, is well represented by oil paintings. There is also a wooden crucifix brought from France by the first of the line to settle here. I suppose one thinks first of the present members of the family as judges, but dozens of them are doctors and hundreds are farmers. It has been estimated that three thousand South Africans now bear the illustrious name.

I would have liked to have carried off the grotesque egg-timer, dated 1706, from the museum kitchen. There is also a decorative *lappieskombers* (patchwork quilt) in the museum which shows how the women spent their evenings. The relics which came from France with the Huguenots are mainly small objects. Among the French furniture you will seldom discover anything larger than a cradle or a box. They were refugees and they had to travel light. Miniatures, snuff-boxes, jugs and candlesticks; such were their treasures.

Mr. Hugo was an official in a great wine firm before he became curator of the museum. He

talked of wine as an expert, and showed me a flask of 1801 vintage sweet muscadel which he keeps locked up in a beefwood cabinet. (What a loss it will be if some ignorant burglar should find that unique red wine.) This muscadel came from Plantatie, home of the Bosman family for generations, the estate in Paarl town with the little slave church in the grounds. When the Bosmans presented this aged wine to the museum they opened another small bottle for Mr. Hugo to taste; a rare privilege indeed. "It was no longer sweet - in fact, the taste was bitter," Mr. Hugo recalled. "But what a marvelous bouquet! "

Then we talked of wine and wine farms and stately buildings. Mr. Max Hough, a retired schoolmaster joined us, a man who had spent his life in the Huguenot country. And I asked these two connoisseurs of white plaster and gables and thatch to tell me which of the surviving old homes in Paarl and the district they considered the most beautiful.

With their minds and memories roaming over the lovely countryside the very names they uttered were like music. They spoke of Languedoc, with its homestead two centuries old, in the biblical Daljosaphat, the valley of Jehosaphat. Nederburg in the same area, secluded, with six gables, a wide red-tiled stoep, and baroque wall-cupboards in the grand interior. Nonpareil of the Viviers and Hugos, with its lovely woodwork; and Schoongezicht in Daljosaphat, another Vivier farm, which had floors of beaten clay within living memory.

I recalled Paarl Diamant, with its green doors, that Gwelo Goodman went to Agter Paarl to paint. Lucky he did, for the house has gone; but they told me there is still a 1712 cottage on the farm. They reminded me of a two-storied house in Paarl town, probably designed by Thibault at the end of the eighteenth century; one of three old double-storied farmhouses in the whole Western Province. (No one has been able to explain to me why prosperous farmers insisted upon single-storied dwellings.) This

rarity is the square, solid classical Vredenhof with high sash window and courts turned into rooms. Vredenhof has an entrance hall laid out with small Batavian tiles and a stoep with Batavian bricks; a heavy cargo which travelled cheaply enough because the Dutch ships needed ballast for their spice-laden ships when they were homeward bound.

Labori et Picardie, another old farm in Paarl town, was the place where the Taillefer brothers were making a palatable wine before the seventeenth century had ended. Francois Leguat, the French traveller who called at Labori, remarked that Isaac Taillefer was a very honest and ingenious man with a garden in which nothing was wanting. "This noble man receives those who visit him excellently well and treats them grandly," Leguat went on. "His wine is the best that is obtained there, and as nearly as possible like our small wines of Champagne. All this considered, it is certain the Cape is an extraordinary refuge for the poor French Protestants. There they enjoy their

happiness in peace with the Hollanders, who as everyone knows are of a frank and downright humour. "

Then my Paarl friends went out, still wandering in the world of memories, along the Simondium road to Babylon's Toren. The house was built long before the eighteenth century ended, and we talked of its magnificence before it lost its gables. The farm is named after a conical koppie. Somewhere on this ground stood the first Huguenot church, "our little church of Drakenstein" as they called it, where Pierre Simond was minister. This building was extremely simple, and Kolbe said it was more like a barn. It sank in the ground at last, and though historians have tried to find the site, not a brick has been located. When it fell in ruins, however, a much finer church was built at Paarl, to be followed early last century by the beloved *strooidak* (thatched roof) church. This church, built in the shape of a Greek cross, surrounded by cypress trees, is the

oldest church building outside Cape Town which is still a church. The gables have delicate curves. There is a bell from the old church, made in 1714 in Amsterdam. A finer piece of church architecture you will not find in Africa.

Our conversation, which had moved away from the Simondium road, now went back to that old highway, and settled on the Marais family home, the farm called Plaisir de Merle. Charles Marais, first owner of the farm and *stamvader* of the large Marais family, was stoned to death by the Hottentots. It seems that elephants and leopards were not the main enemies of the Huguenot pioneers. Some say that the farm should be called Plessis Marle, home of the Marais family in France. However, there is a story that the red-winged starlings which sported among the wild olives reminded Charles Marais of certain black birds in France called *merles*; hence the name. Hollway, a German who did much to improve the Cape wines, had the farm early this

century. The claret he produced there was praised by Leipoldt, no mean judge, and one even greater - Escoffier the chef.

Now here is another road, leading to French Hoek. Two and a half miles from Paarl station you come to De Hoop, not to be confused with De Goede Hoop farm I have mentioned in Paarl's main street. De Hoop is the ancestral home of the Van der Merwes, probably the largest family in South Africa, and the descendants have built a memorial on De Hoop in honour of their *stamvader*. It was in 1692 that Simon van der Stel granted Schalk Willemszoon van der Merwe the freehold of this property. The memorial encloses a fragment which is believed to be the clay wall of the original dwelling; a wall where, according to family legend, the elephants once rubbed their hides.

French Hoek² district has many farms which are in the front rank of architectural gems. Here is La Dauphine with its flagged stoep and the casement windows which the Huguenots preferred. Not far away is Champagne, one of the farms settled by the three De Villiers brothers in 1694. It was the custom on Champagne, up to a century ago, to light a fire on the koppie whenever the visiting minister arrived to hold a service. Now you will find a heap of white stones on the koppie, a beacon in memory of a custom which deserves to be remembered.

La Provence next, ancestral home of the Jouberts, a fascinating homestead almost untouched by time. The facade is perfect, the gable embellished by the flat pilasters which the Huguenots introduced; and the barrel-vault chimney-stacks are unusual. For a century and a half one owner of La Provence after another has shown a fine respect for tradition. It is small, simple and lovely.

² French Hoek always looks queer to me, but it is the official English form laid down by the Place Names Committee, with Franschkoek as the alternative.

L'Omarins is another unspoilt homestead, standing among oaks near a waterfall. La Motte, with its Cape-Flemish entrance gable, is now almost a village. The German who settled there in 1695 would be surprised to see not only shops and a post-office, but also a railway siding.

Lekkerwyn has an appetising name, but the story is grim. The farm was granted to Ary Lecrévent in 1690, and Dutch neighbours soon twisted the name into Lekkerwyn. Close by at Zandvliet (now Delta) lived Hans Silberbach, a burgher who had married a free black woman, Ansela. Lekkerwyn married one of the De Lanoys of Boschendal. Silberbach fell out with Lekkerwyn, killed him with a stick, and fled into the unknown country beyond the mountains. A summons was sent to his farm ordering him to appear at the Castle within eight days. Silberbach did not appear, and so he was declared an outlaw, with the proviso that he would be put to death if he returned. His estate was confiscated and his house was sold by auction. The fate of Silberbach is one of the

unrecorded adventure stories of the old Cape. No one ever heard of him again.

Poor Lekkerwyn's estate yielded its wealth through the centuries, becoming one of the first of the Rhodes' fruit farms, and later the property of Mr. H. E. V. Pickstone. Other farms which Rhodes bought were Boschendal, with its huge stoep and circular steps, and Rhone, a beautiful house with a memorable fanlight. Pearse the architect, who studied these houses, seemed to like Rhone best, for it is in a wonderful state of preservation. Wine cellars and slave quarters complete a great picture.

At last I put my question again. The two connoisseurs then agreed that the beauty queen was Bien Donn  on the Simondium road. This was the farm that Pierre Lombard had before the seventeenth century was out; the little homestead a hundred and fifty years old with noble and interesting gables. Lombard was the *sieket-rooster* of the Huguenots. He never knew the elegance that was to come one day in that wild valley. Those old farms had beautiful names, but

the beautiful homestead was something which was achieved after the first Huguenots and their sons and grandsons had passed on.

With all this talk of the Huguenot country my friends had overlooked the building that was sheltering us. The original parsonage was built on this ground nearly two and a half centuries ago. (At Klein Constantia in the Peninsula you can see the original front door and fanlight.) It was rebuilt in 1787, as it was falling down. The architect sited it to face Paarl mountain, and designed a U-form house seldom encountered in the country. The typical *ringmuur* (circular wall) surrounds it. I understand that the original front gable was so charming that several architects copied it. The present gable may not be a replica, but the whole front is extremely handsome, with fluted pilasters, rich fanlight, sash windows and shutters. You enter the *voorhuis* which also served as dining-room. From this great vestibule, two wings run back towards the Drakenstein mountains. A courtyard between the wings is paved with slate. Long ago

the ministers who lived in this fine *pastorie* had sixty morgen of ground to supply their table; orchards and gardens running from the Berg River to Paarl mountain.

Memorable characters they were, those old ministers. One of them was Petrus van der Spuy, the first South African-born doctor of medicine and minister of religion. It was a tremendous and costly undertaking in the middle of the eighteenth century for an Afrikaner boy to sail for Holland and study there. Petrus, however, was the son of the Van der Spuy *stamvader*, and he had relations in Rotterdam who looked after him. First he qualified in medicine at Groningen; then he studied theology at Leiden. He lived in the Paarl *pastorie* for nearly thirty years.

After him came the Rev. Robert Aling. Lady Anne Barnard met him, and wrote: "We dined at Paarl with a civil, hospitable Dutchman of the name of Aling, the clergyman of the place, and the largest man in height and breadth I ever saw in my life."

I have already mentioned the redoubtable Van der Lingen and his omnibus. The museum has his bookcase, a marvellous object made of seventeen different South African timbers. He wielded so much influence for nearly forty years that he was described as the uncrowned king of Paarl.

Skulls and crossbones are engraved on a slate gravestone which you will find in a back room of the Huguenot Museum. A grim relic of a queer affair. The people most closely concerned lived in this *Pastorie*, and I think they must have formed the unhappiest family ever to occupy that lovely home.

The inscription in Nederlands on the gravestone states that J. W. L. Gebhart junior, aged twenty-two, died on the fifteenth of November, 1822. Here is a translation of the epitaph:

*Rest in peace, unhappy youth
Your career was short and beset
with the false Paths of temptation.
There is little joy in this world*

And much suffering.

*By his faithful and
heart-broken brother and aunt
Henry Gebhart and
Johanna Wolf (born Gebhart).*

Gebhart was convicted of murder and hanged. According to Paarl legend this was a miscarriage of justice brought about by a diabolical conspiracy. There is (or was in recent years) a *gedenkboek* or memorial manuscript in possession of a Paarl resident which gave a version of Gebhart's secret, the untold story and details of the execution. Portions of this manuscript have been published from time to time, and the material certainly suggests a plot worthy of a tragic novel.

Now I am strongly opposed to hanging, and I hope that capital punishment will be abolished in South Africa one day. I believe that innocent people have been convicted of murder and executed. For this reason the Gebhart legend appeared to me to be worth investigating for the

sake of posterity. I have made every effort to discover the truth, and I shall give you both the legend and the results of my own research.

It all began in Holland (runs the legend) when a *Raadsheer*, a man of wealth and position, found himself faced with the prospect of disgrace when an illegitimate child was born. He extricated himself by persuading a church schoolmaster named J. W. L. Gebhart to marry the girl, and he found the husband a post (which amounted to promotion) as minister of religion at the Cape. Gebhart was also rewarded in cash, and he was entrusted with ten thousand gulden for the child. It was understood that Gebhart would retain the money if the child died; but if the child reached the age of twenty-one, the balance of the money, after paying for education, was to be handed over.

Gebhart and his wife reached Cape Town in 1800 (according to the *gedenkboek*) and soon Gebhart was appointed minister of the Dutch Reformed Church at Paarl. In the *Pastorie* which is now the Huguenot Museum the minister's wife gave birth to a son who was named Johan Wilhelm Ludwig,

after the minister. The wife died not long afterwards.

Gebhart then married Johanna du Toit, daughter of the man in charge of the *pastorie* farm. Gebhart later acquired a farm of his own, Simonsvlei in the Klapmuts area. He had two sons and a daughter by Johanna, and he is said to have favoured these children at the expense of the first-born. However, the step-mother and her daughter liked the boy and showed him every kindness. And everywhere he went in Paarl young Wilhelm Gebhart was popular.

Wilhelm was especially welcome at the home of a church *ouderling* (whose name I have not been able to discover) who had a daughter Martjie. At the age of twenty-one Wilhelm fell in love with Martjie.

The Rev. J. W. L. Gebhart was said to have been disliked by his congregation. He had one friend, a Dr. Barneveld, who was also a Hollander.

Young Wilhelm Gebhart worked on the minister's farm Simonsvlei. One day a slave named Klaas

gave trouble and the minister ordered Wilhelm to thrash the slave. The soft-hearted Wilhelm disliked this task as the offence had been trivial; but he obeyed the order while four other slaves held Klaas down. "Hit again! Hit harder!" urged the minister.

That night Wilhelm informed his stepmother that he objected to beating the slaves and he had decided to leave the farm next day. He did so, and the minister called the slaves to work. Then it was found that Klaas was missing. They went to the slave quarters and found Klaas dead. (The room is still there, and is pointed out to visitors.) The minister then went in search of Wilhelm and denounced him in these words: "You are a murderer and you will get your reward. Just wait!"

Dr. Barneveld, according to the *gedenkboek* manuscript, was the government doctor. He and the field cornet were called in and they certified that the slave had died as a result of a thrashing. Young Wilhelm was arrested. When he appeared before the Landdrost at Stellenbosch, the Rev. J.

W. L. Gebhart gave evidence against him, declaring that he had beaten the slave mercilessly.

Wilhelm was tried before the High Court in Cape Town, found guilty and sentenced to death. The manuscript states that the sentence was a crushing blow, and that Wilhelm could not eat or drink.

One day the *ouderling* I have mentioned (Martjie's father) visited Wilhelm in gaol and told him the story of the *Raadsheer* and the legacy. He declared that the *Raadsheer* had written to him, as an elder of the Paarl church, setting out the facts and asking him to find out whether the money had been paid over, as arranged.

"I regarded it as my duty, especially as you are betrothed to my daughter, to talk privately to Dominee Gebhart and read him the letter," went on the *ouderling*. "He was furious. However, I shall write to the *Raadsheer* in Holland and tell him everything. Now you can understand why

your stepfather hated you. But now comes the worst part ... There is a strong suspicion, which no one can prove, that Klaas did not die as a result of the beating. A slave was instructed by your stepfather to kill Klaas in the night. But the poor slaves are so afraid of their master that they dare not speak. My poor boy, I have done everything in my power, but there is no hope of securing a reprieve. We must just pray. When I receive an answer to my letter from Holland it will be too late, but I wish to make your stepfather's behaviour known so that he will be forced to resign as minister."

Wilhelm's reply is given in the manuscript as follows: "Now I understand, and it makes me more unwilling to die. But I do not seek revenge, even after my death. Why should I desecrate the memory of my dear mother and throw dirt on my dear stepmother? If I must die, let my unhappy life go to the grave with me. Just promise to bury me under the two *jamboes* (rose apple) trees at the foot of the mountain."

Wilhelm took a ring from his finger. "Give this to your daughter, and tell her that in the eyes of the world I die as a murderer, but in the eyes of God as a martyr."

Wilhelm also handed the *ouderling* a watch to be given to his son. "Ask your son to put a stone without words on my grave, and tell him never to forget his unlucky friend," added Wilhelm.

The execution was fixed for Friday, November 15, 1822. Wilhelm, dressed in black, was taken from gaol to the front of the High Court in Cape Town, and the death sentence was read out. An official then came forward with a rope to bind Wilhelm's wrists.

"Must I be bound?" Wilhelm asked. "I am ready and willing to die."

"Young man, it must be done."

Wilhelm then climbed into the waiting cart. He was escorted by a Dr. Philip, who had comforted him in gaol. (This was probably the controversial Rev. Dr. John Philip of the London Missionary Society.) On the way to the place of execution

Wilhelm sang hymns. The cart reached the gallows at ten in the morning, passing through a crowd of thousands of people. Many were in tears, and on all sides there were calls for mercy.

After the Rev. J. H. van Manger had said a prayer the time came to climb the steps of the gallows. Wilhelm asked permission to sing one more hymn. In a brave voice, singing in English and Dutch, he rendered "Jesus Lover of my Soul". Then he addressed the crowd.

"I have now only a few seconds to live, and I hope that my example will not be lost on you," Wilhelm declared. "We are all weak and sinful humans, but I do not die as a murderer. I forgive all my persecutors and all who gave evidence against me. I die in peace."

As he was handed over to the hangman, Wilhelm lifted his eyes and said: "O God, must I now come into your hands?" The hangman replied in a sympathetic voice: "Dear young man, give yourself into my hands for you must die." A second before the trap fell, Wilhelm

uttered his last words: "O God, take my soul to You in mercy."

Wilhelm was buried two days later as he had requested, between the two trees, in his stepmother's garden. More than two hundred people were present, including a choir of thirty-six women and girls. After the burial a number of mourners went to the home of a minister named Evans. This minister conducted a further service, and the hymns Wilhelm had sung on the way to the gallows were sung again.

The manuscript also includes a letter Wilhelm wrote to his stepmother shortly before his death. "In my present circumstances and unfortunate position I could not write earlier," Wilhelm began. "Now, through God's mercy, I am a little more peaceful, and so I will describe my feelings and thoughts. Death does not trouble me greatly, for the soul cannot die. My life was not a life of gladness, so why should I wish to live?"

According to the manuscript, Dr. Barneveld committed suicide soon after these events. The slave who had been instructed to murder Klaas became restless, and went to the Landdrost to confess. He was turned out of the office. Soon afterwards the slave hanged himself from a tree near Wilhelm's grave. It was said that the Landdrost and other officials were afraid of reopening the case as they might be blamed for an unjust execution.

Such is the legend. Versions have appeared in different magazines and newspapers, in English and Afrikaans, for more than half a century. I believe the first publication was in "Ons Klyntji", the pioneer Afrikaans magazine printed at Paarl early this century. When I consulted these versions I found so many differences that I went back to the source material, the full report of the trial published in the Cape Town "Gazette and Advertiser" during November and December, 1822. Everyone who has done any serious historical research knows that when you go back to the

source there are often queer discoveries to be made, and the mistakes of later years, due to ignorance and carelessness, are revealed under a white light. But I was not prepared for the very different story revealed in Cape Town's first newspaper.

Wilhelm Gebhart was tried for the murder of the slave Joris of Mozambique (not Klaas as stated in the manuscript) before Sir John Truter, Chief justice of the colony. Mr. D. J. van Ryneveld, Landdrost of Stellenbosch and Drakenstein, appeared for the Crown, while Advocate Cloete defended.

First witness was David Heyden, overseer of the Simonsvlei farm. He said that Joris, aged forty-five, was slow at his work, and he punished him and reported the matter to Wilhelm.

Wilhelm told four slaves to hold Joris down. Then he beat him with bundles of quince sticks. The slave laughed. Wilhelm beat him several times and then ordered him to go to the wine store for further punishment. Joris was too weak

to walk by this time, so he was dragged on his stomach. Heyden then went home. One slave after another gave evidence. It seems that Wilhelm and the slaves entered the wine store at seven in the evening, and for the next two hours (with intervals for rest) Wilhelm beat Joris. Bullock harness and quince sticks were used, and more than a hundred strokes were administered. When the light failed a candle was lit. Finally salt and vinegar were applied to the wounds. Joris had lost consciousness. Vinegar was poured into his mouth, but he did not recover his senses. He died at eight next morning.

It is clear from the evidence that the only European present throughout the flogging was Wilhelm, and that the Rev. J. W. L. Gebhart only arrived at Simonsvlei next day after Joris had died. Another point which casts doubt on the story in the manuscript is that the district surgeon who examined the body and gave evidence was a Dr. Robert Shand, and not the minister's friend, Dr. Barneveld.

Wilhelm Gebhart, the accused, said in evidence that he was born in London. Joris had often pretended to be ill, and appeared to be malingering while he was being beaten. Several witnesses, called by the defence, declared that Wilhelm was an honest young man and good to his slaves.

Advocate Cloete, addressing the court, said that he could not ask for an acquittal. "We will admit that the unfortunate death of Joris cannot be attributed to any other cause but the punishment applied to him," Cloete declared. "Such punishment is not uncommon, and the prisoner intended only to chastise. Thus I ask for a verdict of manslaughter,"

Apparently the Court agreed with Landdrost van Ryneveld, who had pointed out previously that similar crimes had occurred too often and the colony required punishment of the utmost severity. The verdict was wilful murder.

Study this report and you see the legend in its true perspective. I have also searched the

records for details of the Rev. J. W. L. Gebhart, and I found that he was born at Mannheim and went to England from Heidelberg. In 1805 he was appointed minister of the Walloon Church at Norwich, after serving in the Huguenot Church in London. He came to the Cape in 1810. Thus the legend in the manuscript is again at fault, and the whole story of the marriage being arranged by the *Raadsheer* becomes suspect.

The Rev. J. W. L. Gebhart must have been a fairly wealthy man. The issue of the Cape Town newspaper reporting the conviction of Wilhelm Gebhart contains an advertisement offering for sale the minister's house in Burg Street, Cape Town, the Simonsvlei farm, an erf in Paarl, another farm at Swellendam, seventy slaves (including coachmen, wagoners, house-boys and housemaids), seventy draught oxen, cattle, wagons, carts and a quantity of wine.

The minister died in Cape Town in 1825. He left legacies to the London Missionary Society and the French poor of the Walloon

congregation at Mannheim. He may have had a secret, but the Paarl legend certainly does not do him justice. It is perfectly clear that he was no murderer, just as it is absolutely certain that young Wilhelm Gebhart alone was responsible for the death of the slave Joris.

The gravestone was laid face down across a narrow sloop, and it served for years as a bridge until the museum authorities rescued it. Apparently a new owner of the erf on which Wilhelm was buried asked the relatives to remove the grave. When they dug below the stone, however, they could find neither coffin nor skeleton.

Well may you shudder when you gaze upon that sinister headstone bearing the name of Gebhart with its skulls and crossbones.

CHAPTER 4

THE LAST OUTPOST

You came to the Cape frontier five miles beyond Paarl in the days of the Van der Stels. Now the old frontier is Wellington, and I find

a little difficulty in thinking of tranquil Wellington as an "ultima Thule". It is like trying to imagine an English cathedral town at the entrance to the Khyber Pass.

Nevertheless, the earliest name of the Wellington area was Limiet Vallei, and indeed the farms marked the limit of civilisation, the last outposts of the Cape settlement. Limietberg above the town still reminds us of those days.

Old maps show that Gabbema and his men reached Limiet Vallei after their Paarl discoveries. There was a brush with the Hottentots there some years later. Then the Hottentots trekked off in the direction of Goudini, and the settlers came in. By the year 1700, Dutch and Huguenot pioneers had been granted a number of farms.

French farm names are fairly rare in this district, however; the Huguenots had been in the country for a decade and were losing the early sentimental nostalgia which made them

transfer the names of their old birthplaces to this far country. Nevertheless, the Huguenots called the new district Val du Charron. Probably there was a wagon-maker among them, for Val du Charron has the same meaning as Wagenmaker's Vallei. On the other hand some Wellingtonians believe that the name was derived from the *waboom* (*Protea grandiflora*) that once grew there. This timber was used for the felloes of wagon-wheels.

Among the oldest farms in the district are Versailles and Olyvenhout, now standing on each side of the Wellington railway station. Little remains of the old buildings, though thirty-five years ago Dorothea Fairbridge claimed to have found an H-shaped house which might have been the original home-stead. Pierre Cronier (soon to become Cronje) was the first owner. His brother Etienne settled on Olyvenhout, where some restoration and enlargement of a very old building have been carried out.

De Fortuin, to the south of the town, is another old grant with a fine homestead probably built early last century. The original ceilings were of bamboo on yellow-wood beams. Leeuwen Vallei, near the Bain's Kloof road, is the ancestral home of the Celliers family, a great name in this district, rivalled by the Roussouws. Dorothea Fairbridge thought the slave quarters here might have formed the earliest homestead.

On the farm Leeuwtuin in the Bovlei area they show you the pile of boulders where the last lion of the Wagenmaker's Vallei was shot. That was in 1803, and the lion had frightened a Hottentot woman doing her washing in the stream. When she reported the encounter the farmer loaded his muzzle-loader with *lopers* and killed that fine male lion.

Welvanpas ranks high among Wellington's famous homes. It has been in the possession of one family, the Retiefs, for more than two centuries. In a previous book I stated that the Melcks, Myburghs and Faures were the oldest

owners of their ancestral farms in the country. Now I must add the Retiefs, who may well head the list.

De Krakeelhoek (Dispute Corner) was the original name of this farm, and I have seen various histories of the place. Dorothea Fairbridge said that Claude Marais was the first owner, in 1699, while another version states that it was first granted in 1705 to Pierre Mouy. My authority, Mrs. Lombard (formerly Miss Helene Retief) informed me that the pioneer was a Vos, who settled there in 1699. Vos sold the farm to Daniel Marais in or about 1730. On December 3, 1741, Francois Retief married Anna, daughter of Daniel Marais. The farm passed to the Retief family as Daniel Marais had no sons. The fifth son of Francois Retief succeeded to the farm, by this time named Welvanpas (Well Fitting). He was Jacobus Retief, born in 1754, and father of the Voortrekker leader Piet Retief.

Piet Retief spent the first twenty-two years of his life at Welvanpas. He lived in a house which has gone, though the site can be identified by the cobblestones and the enormous loquat tree planted by Piet's mother. An old kraal wall survives from the very early days when leopards were more troublesome than they are today.

So the farm passed from father to son through the centuries, and every one of them named Daniel. Piet's brother Daniel was born in 1790, the next Daniel (the famous "Lang Daantjie"), in 1837, the next in 1861, the next in 1896, and the fifth of the line is now twenty years of age.

The present house was built in 1817 by a Malay slave who had a great reputation as a gable craftsman. A screen of polished syringa wood adorns the *voorhuis*. The Retiefs have an unusual mosaic table covered with little scraps of early blue and white pottery dug up on the farm. A very old sundial was also unearthed some years ago.

Welvanpas is a wine and citrus farm. It covers twelve hundred morgen, and has never been divided. Much of it is mountain land, and Bain's Kloof runs through it. Labourers on the farm are able to tell the time with fair accuracy by watching the shadows thrown by the aptly-named Horlosieberg.

You will remember that Lady Anne Barnard was entertained at Paarl by Aling, the huge clergyman. Her letters also give a picture of life in the Wagenmaker's Vallei at the end of the eighteenth century. Her host, an orange farmer named Wegg, told her that he had sent twenty-seven wagons loaded with oranges to Cape Town, each wagon carrying six thousand, and he had as many more to send.

They had a gigantic meal that night. Starting with a Cape ham, they went on to hindquarters of buck well larded and good; two fat ducks, a curried fowl, rice well boiled, fine peas, stewed beans, cabbage, potatoes, salad garnished with two dozen hard boiled eggs, and a dish of egg pudding. Pastry and fruit ended the meal, but

Lady Anne complained in a letter: "I do not think a strawberry is a strawberry without sugar and cream."

When the coffee came in the morning the voracious Lady Anne wondered anxiously whether there would be a proper breakfast. Her fears were set at rest, for more coffee, tea, hard-boiled eggs and meat were placed on the table.

Lady Anne and her husband ordered some wine from Mr. Lategan of Doolhof. She thought it was excellent, though the sulphur put some people against it. And she added: "Mr. Lategan was making an experiment from which I have good hopes of getting a liqueur nice and new for you, extracting brandy from the sweetest ripe oranges. I think it will answer."

Farmers in the Wagenmaker's Vallei tried to establish their own church as far back as 1800. The movement did not come to a head until the rainy winter of 1837, when the Berg River pont sank and those on the far side of

the river were unable to go to church in Paarl for months on end.

Even then the Paarl *kerkraad* was not sympathetic. Dr. John Addey, chairman of the Wagenmaker's Vallei church committee, and his helpers raised the funds, however, and the farm Champagne was bought from Mr. F. Marais for £1575. Part of the land was devoted to the church and *Pastorie*, while the rest was cut up in erven. The foundation stone was laid in 1838, and two years later the Rev. A. F. du Toit was installed as the first minister.

Then arose a desire to name the new village. Addey's Dorp was the first proposal, but the modest Dr. Addey turned it down. Various anecdotes are told about the problem of the naming of Wellington, and there seems to have been some differences of opinion at the time. The residents decided to call the place Napier, after Sir George Napier, the Governor. However, this Governor (unlike Lord Charles Somerset) saw no reason for

using the map of the Cape as a sort of genealogical tree. He refused the request. A member of the deputation then suggested using Lady Napier's maiden name, which was Blencowe. Again the Governor shook his head firmly. I suppose the deputation, grumbling in their beards, were understood to ask: "What the devil are we to call the place then?" Inspiration visited Sir George Napier, and he replied: "Call it Wellington. It is a disgrace that in this colony no place bears that name."

An alternative story suggests that as the Paarl minister had met his Waterloo over the church dispute, the congregation which had defeated him should take the name of Wellington. Farmers in the Wellington district spoke of going to "Die Vlei", meaning Wagenmaker's Vallei, when they went to church. Wellington remained "Die Vlei" for many years after it had been named by the Governor.

Wellington was a lively place while the Bain's Kloof pass was being built. The opening of the pass in 1853 made Wellington the

gateway into the interior. Many adventurers passed through the village. When the diamond fields were discovered the flow of fortune hunters became a torrent.

Before the new pass was opened, travellers to the north had to go from Wellington to Hermon and then through Tulbagh Pass. Bain created a short-cut of thirty miles, a full day's journey in those horse-drawn years.

What sort of pass could you build today for fifty thousand pounds? Du Toit's Kloof cost a million. Yet fifty thousand was the total cost of Bain's Kloof, spread over more than four years, and including about eighteen thousand spent on food for the convicts. Bain himself got his modest salary and a purse of two hundred and fifty pounds subscribed by certain people in the districts which benefited most from his work. They threw in a fine silver candelabra for luck, as well they might.

Most of the convicts had no reason to rejoice. If one of their number escaped, a party of

"trusties" were sent after him; and the man who made the capture gained a six month's remission of sentence. For all the other men who built the pass there was no great reward. They lived in fair shelter during the construction in barracks of mountain stone which can still be seen. Two chaplains, a chapel, a doctor and hospital were provided. But their graves are there, too, littering the mountainside and filling a special cemetery.

Bain was a geologist, not a trained engineer. Yet men with the highest qualifications as engineers, but who have never learnt the art of drystone masonry, gaze in admiration at the work carried out by Bain and his convicts. Along one stretch the pass is cut into the side of the mountain for four hundred yards, and the road hangs over a drop of hundreds of feet to the Witte River bed. Bain's retaining wall on the lower side of the road often reaches fifty feet in height; fifty feet of blocks of mountain stone fitted together with exquisite

skill. It was done without a sack of cement, and the wall still carries the road.

Bain was a shy man. At the banquet after the official opening of the pass he rose with great reluctance and declared: "I would rather make another Bain's Kloof than make a speech. I am nothing but a common highwayman and only accustomed to blazing and blasting. I thank you from my heart."

I miss Bain's Kloof, now that the national road goes over Du Toit's Kloof. Many others who complained of that narrow way must feel they have lost something. I slept down below, close to the river, in the old days, and heard the baboons on their ledges and bathed in the Witte River pools at sunrise. It was easy to imagine the fanfare as the stage coach drove up the pass and the conductor sounded his bugle. The lamps of the last stage coach are used to light a weekend cottage on Bain's Kloof. For almost a century this was the way to the north, a road of adventure such as South Africa will never see again. Du Toit's Kloof is quicker. It

has a romance of its own, as I shall tell you. But I still miss Bain's Kloof, with its memories of my youth.

Wellington prospered as the clearing-house for much of the trade of the interior. It became the railhead in 1863, and for more than a decade the freight was offloaded there, packed on wagons and sent over Bain's Kloof to the north.

Probably the greatest disaster in Wellington village last century was the 1875 fire. In those days the fastest way of reaching Cape Town in an emergency (if you had the money) was to charter a special train. One Sunday morning in October 1875 an engine and one carriage, bearing Mr. Coaton and half a dozen other residents, brought the news to Cape Town that Wellington had lost forty houses and shops the previous night.

Everyone had gone to bed. At half past eleven that night a Mr. Schwartz, living in Bain Street, heard someone knocking on his front

door. No one was there when he went out, but he saw that his thatch was on fire. Schwartz just had time to get his family out and save a few pieces of furniture; then the house was a mass of flames. A violent east wind was blowing, sparks were blown from street to street, one thatched house after another was destroyed.

Mr. Atherton, owner of one of the best houses in town, with ten rooms, lost his house and shop. In the stables of Mr. Cilliers two horses valued at one hundred pounds were smothered by smoke. A piano tuner named Martienssen was the worst sufferer. He was asleep when the blazing roof fell on him, and although he escaped with his life he lost both his eyes and his face was disfigured. Everywhere panic-stricken people rushed into the street in their nightgowns. There was no fire-engine, though a brigade would not have been much use as Wellington was short of water at the time.

Sunday was a pleasant, genial day in contrast with the horrors of the night. For four hours

the fire had raged. Now the gable ends of the gutted houses stood above the blackened walls, and only the twisted metal of bedsteads and smoking rubble were to be seen within. Farmers entering the village for *nagmaal* were shocked, for they knew nothing of the disaster.

I found the municipal valuations of the burnt-out properties in the "Cape Argus". Schwartz's place was valued at £400, while the mansion of John Atherton was given as £50, with another £400 for the shop. One insurance company expected to pay out £4000. A relief fund started by the Rev Andrew Murray brought in £500 and helped all the most needy families.

The fire seems to have been the work of a criminal, for the man who knocked at Schwartz's door never called again. Schwartz had put out his kitchen fire at four o'clock the previous afternoon. Neighbours spoke of a dark figure seen climbing Schwartz's wall and running away. All that can be said for that mysterious Wellington incendiary of long ago

is that he raised the alarm and gave Schwartz a chance of saving his life.

At least one person who remembered the great fire of Wellington was still living there a few years ago. She was Miss Gertie Malherbe, aged eighty-eight. "My two small brothers tried to rush me out of the house, but I insisted on putting my best shoes on first," Miss Malherbe recalled. "To this day, no one knows how that fire started."

Wellington's greatest character, everyone will agree, was Dr. Andrew Murray, known to many of the older people of the town as "meneer Morrie". His statue stands in the grounds of the Dutch Reformed Church at Wellington, where he ministered for nearly forty years of his long life.

Few greater personalities have ever appeared on the South African scene. His sermons are still vivid in the minds of old members of the congregation, for he was a brilliant preacher. He wrote more than two hundred books and

pamphlets, and it is said that one of his religious works started a Christian revival in China. Certainly his influence was felt far beyond the Wellington district. He was elected six times as Moderator of the church.

John X. Merriman, as Prime Minister of the Cape, paid Murray this tribute: "If ever there was a dweller in the household of faith it was Andrew Murray. It was given to him, a Calvinist, to write books of devotion that met with the highest commendation at the hands of the most High Church Anglican bishops - books which have been a source of consolation and comfort to many weary souls in travail in many lands and of many creeds. Well for us all would it be if we could bury in his grave that racial bitterness and social discord against which his whole life was a protest."

It was in 1860 that "meneer Morrie" first worked in Wellington. In that year a young Hollander named M. J. Stucki landed at Cape Town from a sailing ship. Stucki became one of the great country school-teachers, and Dr.

Murray showed keen interest in the school at Blouvlei, Wellington, where Stucki presided for more than forty years.

Stucki had expected to find himself among peasants. He recorded his surprise when he discovered that the Wellington farmers had the courteous manners of townsfolk, while the women were smartly dressed. They could all read and write, and the only deficiency he noted was in experience of the world outside South Africa.

They pulled his leg at first, and told him that the nests of the finches hanging from the poplar trees were the fruit; known as *populier appels*. Some of the Afrikaans words he heard baffled him - *baie*, *soe!*, *kamma* - for these had no equivalents in his own language. But he soon settled down to teach in the Bovlei wine cellar that served as classroom. His salary started at forty-two pounds a year with free board and lodging.

Those were the glorious days of the ox-wagon, when many farmers trekked away in March and April every year to find buyers for their dried apricots and raisins. Then in August and September they would set off again with oranges, wine and brandy. Stucki recalled that before the railway to Cape Town opened, and for years afterwards, the road at busy periods was a cavalcade of wagons. Every outspan was a scene for a painter, with its fires and coffee pots, activity and laughter.

He found that after half a century of British rule the country people still spoke of gulden, skellings, rix dollars and stuiwers, though the money they handled consisted of pounds, shillings and pence. Stucki lived to well over ninety, a beloved "Mr. Chips" in the Afrikaans tradition.

Wellington is a leisurely town, with a summer climate which does not encourage foolish haste. Some people, looking a little enviously at Paarl, perhaps, think that Wellington might do more in the direction of modern enterprise.

Others believe that the atmosphere of culture, the spiritual life, are worth more than factories. Nevertheless, the town has never been backward. In a side street you can see the steel water-wheel that drove Wellington's flour mill a century ago.

Once the wagon-builders flourished at Wellington as they did at Paarl. When I was in Wellington not long ago a solitary blacksmith was pointed out to me, last survivor of a romantic era. However, the town is very far from being simply a farming centre. Canning, dried fruit, textiles and wool-washing industries form a contrast with the old Wellington of training colleges, institutes, seminaries and schools.

One of my last-century Cape directories states that the Huguenot Seminary "takes girls as pupils from the ages of three to thirty". Robert N. T. Ballantyne, the Scottish author of books for boys, visited Wellington in the eighteen-seventies. He was greatly impressed by the teaching at the Huguenot Seminary, then in

charge of American women. Not only did the girls receive a sound education but they made their own beds, cooked their meals and learned to run a household. In the garden they were happy and vivacious. "There is much talk in Great Britain of the higher education of women," Ballantyne remarked, "but those who talk can come out and see at Wellington their pet schemes in full swing".

No district in South Africa can rival Wellington as an apricot centre. (I have already mentioned the mebos.) About sixty years ago a Wellington jam factory canned forty tons of apricots a year. Today there is one factory which handles two thousand tons of apricots in a season of three weeks, and the same quantity of peaches. I can remember an old-fashioned jam factory at Wellington where they were boiling the traditional Cape jams in huge copper pans. Ginger and melon was one of my early favourites, with Cape gooseberry a close second.

Who founded the modern Cape fruit industry? It is a familiar argument, and few people know the facts. I shall revert to it later. Wellington, I think, can claim one of her own sons, Mr. Piet J. Cillie (the celebrated "Piet California") as the pioneer of modern orchard planting. Piet Cillie was chosen by the Wellington farmers, and Merriman's government, to go on an official mission to California in the early 'nineties of last century. On his return, the progressive Piet Cillie introduced the most successful methods of planting, pruning and fruit culture. One day Cecil John Rhodes left the train at Wellington station to see what was going on in the fruit industry, and "Piet California" showed him round and made the possibilities clear to him. After that visit Rhodes commissioned Piet to buy a number of farms on his behalf.

Early this century a Mr. A. R. E. Burton, F.R.G.S., visited Wellington and was pleasantly surprised to find that the Cape cart driver who took him from railway station to hotel

charged only a shilling. The fare was two shillings after hours, but it did not matter whether it was midnight or cockcrow, Mr. Burton commandeered this reasonable driver for his outings. "Whatever the coast towns may feel of depression, there is little or none of it among the farmers of Cape Colony - the core is sound," he wrote. "The days of our visit were in the heat of a Wellington summer, and we felt the wisdom of the ancients in planting trees among which the roomy old houses are cooled by the green shade. At one o'clock all sign of life has disappeared. Tiffin is on."

Then he drove up Bain's Kloof. A sixpenny toll was collected at the point where the ascent of the pass began. He said the journey was sufficiently hazardous to be exciting. "Everyone should take his skoff-box with him, for there is no hotel and the bracing air is very appetising," Mr. Burton remarked. "Before exploring the kloofs we were fortunate enough to meet some old residents who thrilled us with their lion and tiger adventures. We were told

that lions and 'tiger cats' still prowl about the mountain paths and fastnesses. We looked carefully to the priming of our rifle."

If only Mr. Burton had been an F.R.Z.S., instead of an F.R.G.S., he would have known that the last lion was killed in those mountains a century before his visit. His "tiger cats" were leopards, of course, and they are probably as numerous today as they were in Mr. Burton's time.

In a ravine above Bain's Kloof stands the ruin of a small palace. Some say that the rich owner planned this white mansion as a honeymoon home. There were twenty rooms, a fine staircase, handsome fireplaces, a swimming bath fed by a mountain stream, lawns and gardens. A special road was built to reach the sanctuary.

It was magnificent, but the loneliness and the baboons repelled the bride. So it was nearly always empty. The husband died. Then the Paarl municipality bought the whole area for a

water scheme, and the house was abandoned completely. One night there was a fire. No one will ever live in that mountain palace again.

CHAPTER 5

WINE AND BREAD

*By Faith supported and by Freedom led,
A fruitful field amidst the desert making,
They dwelt secure when kings and priests
were quaking,
And taught the waste to yield them wine and
bread.*

Thomas Pringle.

They tell the story at French Hoek of a French-speaking couple from Egypt who came to settle in the village after World War II because they thought there would be no language problem. After a long search they located one man in French Hoek who could speak French.

French Hoek is a typical corner of the Huguenot country, but it was never completely French. Nine or ten French families, and three or four Hollanders were among

the pioneers. Some of the early Huguenots were granted Stellenbosch farms. They were a devoted clan at that time, however, and for long afterwards; and those who had been left behind at civilised Stellenbosch soon began pining for their compatriots who had gone on over the pass into the wild Berg River valley. They cleared out in the end, all but three families. Thus the Drakenstein settlers became known as the "French colony", and men spoke of the Stellenbosch district as the "Dutch Colony".

French Hoek was originally Olifants Hoek, a suitable name for a place where herds of elephants had found sanctuary in the breeding season for hundreds of years. The Huguenots had to cut down the forests to build their homes; but the last of the elephants still migrated there every year for more than a century after the founding of the settlement. However, the French tamed the place sufficiently to call it Le Coin Francais (French Corner). It was also known as Quartier

Francaise and La Petite La Rochelle.

Among the earliest Huguenot farms at French Hoek, besides the De Villiers' farms and others I have mentioned previously, were Cabrierre (Jordaan), La Cotte (Gardiol), La Terre de Lucque and married a Huguenot, the Countess Almyne du Pre, or du Plessis.

If the legend is without foundation, it is at all events a grand narrative. The historian Theal declared that the first Ferreira remained at the Cape after the wreck of the English ship Chandos in Table Bay in 1722. There are many references in the Cape Archives to this lad. The records throw no light on a Countess Almyne du Pre. I suppose Theal is right, but I still cannot understand why the diarist (Ferreira's grandson) and the author Latrobe should have written down a piece of sheer fiction. Or was there, after all, some truth in the story?

Mr. John Noble, who became Clerk of the Cape House of Assembly, carried out some

useful research at French Hoek about a century ago. He was there in September, when the orange groves were golden with fruit. Even in those days it was not uncommon to see a thousand orange and naartjie trees in one clump. The vines were shooting out their first coat of bright green, spring flowers covered the veld, while on the mountains, in the high ravines, lay the last of the winter snow. French Hoek was a hamlet amid oaks and firs, with white-washed buildings shut, in by hedges of blackberry and quince. Sandy paths led from farm to farm.

Noble was able to locate on the farm La Rochelle the ruins of the original house built by the three De Villiers brothers in 1694; fragments of the moulded clay walls with reed covering. This, he was told, was the first building and the first farm in the French Hoek valley. The eldest of the patriarchal De Villiers brothers, recorded Noble, was married twice and had twenty-five children. He lived to see his hundredth grandchild.

Noble hoped to find documents, but the records of early French Hoek appear to have been lost or destroyed when the countryside was in turmoil during the early years of the eighteenth century after Adam Tas had been arrested. All the traditions which Noble collected had come down through one hundred and fifty years by word of mouth.

He was told that the first Hugo, the Daniel Hugo who died in French Hoek in 1724, was only four feet four inches in height. Most of his descendants were still short people.

One of Noble's hosts showed him the only heirloom his ancestors had been able to carry away from France with them. This was an ornamented glass. A movement was started in 1824, according to Noble, to collect as many Huguenot relics as possible at French Hoek. Old documents, Bibles, psalm books, and crystal goblets from the chateaux of France were specially mentioned. Money was subscribed, for even then a strong sense of tradition had grown up and descendants of the

Huguenots were eager to preserve their past. Advocate Joubert had the nucleus of a museum in his possession. Then he died, and all the valuable relics disappeared. Noble understood that they had been scattered by the auctioneer's hammer. All that Noble could find was a subscription list bearing the names of all the Huguenot families. What a loss posterity suffered at that long forgotten sale!

One might have expected the Huguenots to have had a profound influence on the Afrikaans language. They settled in the districts where Afrikaans was developing at the time of their arrival. Yet for some reason hardly a French word was embodied in the new language at that period. Experts believe that a few fruit names sum up almost the entire Huguenot contribution - *paweeperske* (white clingstone peach) for example. The double negative may have had its origin in French, but that is doubtful. French words such as *bordes* (flight of steps) and *passabel* (fordable) which are to be found in Afrikaans dictionaries were

in use long before the Huguenots arrived.

Seldom does a language die out as quickly and completely as the French of the Huguenots did. The pressure must have been severe. Le Vaillant, the French traveller, visited the Cape a century after the landing of the Huguenots and went round the countryside looking for someone who could speak his language. After a long search he discovered one old man who understood French.³

Mentzel, the observant German traveller, passed through the Drakenstein valley about forty years after the pioneers had started work there. He described the small French Hoek valley as the best part of the Cape because of its extraordinary fertility. Eight farms there

³ A writer in the "Cape Times Annual" of 1910, dealing with French Hoek, stated: "One family has, up to the past seventy years, maintained a pure French line of descent, but the language has long been dead, not so long but that an old man of seventy-three, recently deceased, could remember his grandmother and the people of her time speaking French as well as Dutch."

fetched high prices at sales, or were taken over by the heirs at a high valuation. Although the first colonists had arrived destitute, and had borrowed cattle, implements, seed and bread-corn from the Company, they were the first to repay their debt amounting to many thousands of gulden. Their industry and thrift, went on Mentzel, soon enabled them to build comfortable homes, though in the early years they had occupied "very bad huts" .

In spite of its early prosperity, French Hoek waited a long time for its own church and minister. A legacy of five thousand Cape gulden left by Maria Fransina Joubert gave an impetus to the movement, and in 1833 the Rev. G. W. A. van der Lingen drove over from Paarl to open the new church. One of the early ministers was the Rev. Pieter Ham. The church records state that Ham was distressed because some members of his congregation believed in witchcraft. Ham wrote to the *kerkraad* in Cape Town about it, and was instructed to make use of *huisbesoek* to issue warnings against such

beliefs. Even today ministers have sometimes to deal with *toordery* among white people.

French Hoek claims the oldest existing government school in South Africa. It was in 1850 that Mr. F. C. M. Voigts was installed as teacher, the coloured church serving as schoolroom. White and coloured children sat in the same classes for some years without raising an outcry; possibly because the white pupils of the period were very poor, and there were comparatively few coloured children. Wealthy farmers sent their children away to school.

It was often difficult to reach the school in wet weather as the streams were not bridged and the vleis spread over the roads. One principal, who lodged on the farm Champagne, saw no point in trudging down to the village in the rain only to find the classroom empty. This easy-going man told his pupils to hoist a white flag when a sufficient number had assembled. Only then did he deign to set out. When there was no flag the school remained closed.

Another principal was such a poor disciplinarian the children spent most of their time devising practical jokes. The climax arrived at the end of a year when not a single pupil passed the examinations.

A dramatic change came over the school early this century, when Dr. G. G. Cillié was appointed as principal. The name of the French Hoek school began to appear in the first class matriculation list. At this time Afrikaners in the Transvaal and Orange Free State became aware of the need for better education, and such was the fame of French Hoek that many of them sent their sons there. Others came from the Afrikaner communities in German South West Africa and East Africa.

Oldest pupil in the 1907 matriculation class was Harold Meintjes, aged thirty-seven, a bearded man who had been failing the examination year after year for ten years. He knocked out his pipe on the stoep just a little too late. Dr. Cillie saw him and stopped his smoking until he had passed the matric.

Famous men who attended this little school included General Wynand Malan, Dr. H. J. van der Byl of Iscor, S. B. Hobson the author, Kohler of the K.W.V., Mr. J. G. Carinus, former Administrator of the Cape, and Adv. J. G. Strydom, Prime Minister. Van der Byl showed his organising instinct during his schooldays. An important football match was to be played at Paarl, and many people in those pre-motoring days wished they could see it. Van der Byl chartered a special train. Then he offered tickets (allowing himself a handsome profit) and packed every compartment.

Another school in the neighbourhood with a great reputation is the Klein Drakenstein primary school. This was started four years after the French Hoek school. It is a farm school, one of the type which is dying out after wielding a great influence in the life of the nation. Close by at Simondium there was a public school (now closed) where a Mr. George Hutchinson spent his whole career as teacher. Hutchinson Peak, the great north-

western buttress of the Groot Drakenstein range, perpetuates his name.

One of French Hoek's personalities during the last decades of last century and afterwards was Mr. J. P. Kriel de Villiers. He started as a teacher. Then he opened a little shop which grew into the largest general dealer's business in the village. "Oom Koos", as he became in time, also acted as bank manager, law agent, justice of the peace, member of the school board and mayor. He served for twenty-five years as cashier of the *kerkraad* and thirty-six years as church organist. When he was in his prime French Hoek would have collapsed without him. Many young men consulted "Oom Koos" before choosing a career, and he financed some who needed money. "Oom Koos" owned several cottages where he allowed aged people and invalids to live rent free. Such a man is not soon forgotten in a village.

French Hoek is a great place for plums nowadays. One hundred thousand plum trees

make this district the Union's leading plum orchard. At one time, however, it looked as though this valley of fruit and wine was going to become a tobacco area. It began in 1910, when Mr. L. M. Stella, a Greek from Smyrna, settled at French Hoek. One day in the garden he opened a letter from a friend in Turkey and some tobacco seeds fell out and germinated by accident.

Mr. Stella knew something about tobacco planting, though he had never thought of cultivating Turkish tobacco at French Hoek. He recognised the plants when they came up, tended them, collected seeds and started a new industry in his new home. Some years ago the Turkish tobacco crop harvested in the Western Province reached a weight of about two million pounds. The present annual output is half that amount, for the world now favours the Virginia tobacco flavour. Turkish leaf is used in blends, but French Hoek no longer grows it now that the boom is over. Still, there is no doubt that Mr. Stella influenced agricultural

history in the Cape when he dropped those seeds in his garden.

My favourite honey comes from a French Hoek farm. Beekeepers, the cunning fellows, tell you that honey is the secret of long life. I enjoy honey because it has as many flavours as jam, and I like a change now and again. Blue gum blossom is South Africa's most popular honey, I believe, but you can have avocado or clover, orange or lucerne, prickly, pear or mango. Years ago honey was a seasonal delicacy. Now there are farmers who keep so many hives, and feed their bees so skilfully, that they produce honey all the year round. But the French Hoek farm has the largest apiary in the Southern Hemisphere; fifteen hundred hives with an output of one hundred tons of honey a year.

French Hoek does not strain consciously after records, I think, but there is another sight in the neighbourhood worth mentioning. The farm Bellingham (formerly Bellegam or Bellingkamp) has a sweet saffron pear tree

planted about two centuries ago. It is believed to be the largest and oldest pear tree in South Africa, with a girth of ten feet and height of forty feet. Once it was much higher, but the top branch has fallen. Nevertheless, it still rivals some full-grown oaks close by. Old age does not work any special magic in the fruit, unfortunately, and these pears are now uneatable. With vines it is different.

No doubt you have seen Pniel mission from the Helshoogte road. This place, with its Biblical name meaning "the face of God", stands as a monument to a noble character. The mission has been there since 1843 and the man who started it is remembered by many, for he died in 1910 after a career which was remarkable and possibly unequalled even in the mission field.

The mission was laid out on the farm Papiermeul, and the idea was to carry out social and religious work among the recently emancipated slaves. Thus the Rev. Johan Frederik Stegman began his life work at the

age of nineteen. He was an orphan, but he had managed to secure a good education and had been ordained as a missionary.



"The farm Bellingham (formerly Bellegam or Bellingkamp) has a sweet saffraan pear tree planted about two centuries ago."

Mr. P. G. M. Scholtz, who grew up on a farm not far from Pniel, came to know Stegman well towards the end of last century. "He taught the Pniel children for fifty years, and carried on as missionary for another ten years," Mr. Scholtz told me. "During that time he never took a

holiday. I never met such a worker. Every afternoon he took a walk through the village, but this was not relaxation for he visited his people, acted as doctor, and also kept a sharp look-out for signs of drinking."

Stegman charged a penny a week for each child attending his school. He was an autocrat, the monarch of Pniel, a disciplinarian such as his coloured congregation had never known before. Some rebelled against this iron rule. Stones were thrown on Stegman's roof at night, and once or twice he was assaulted in the darkness. After that he carried a police whistle, and the faithful came running to his aid when he needed them.

His sermons, in spite of the length, aroused wide interest. Many white people sat in the mission church to hear him. French Hoek was without a Dutch Reformed Church minister for five years in the 'sixties of last century, so Stegman volunteered to hold a service every Sunday morning in addition to conducting the services in his own church. That meant a long

ride with a packet of sandwiches in his saddle-bag, but he came back at the gallop and never failed his congregation.

Mrs. Stegman kept a small shop for the benefit of the mission people. All the necessities were there, but it was a simple array. Mr. Scholtz recalled that among the penny items were needles, thread and snuff. Mrs. Stegman also held sewing meetings once a month, at which the women appeared neatly dressed with huge snow-white aprons.

Nowadays the descendants of the freed slaves of Pniel are fairly comfortable. Some till their own soil, others are shop keepers, factory workers, farm labourers or drivers.

On the Simonsberg slopes above Pniel mission you will still find traces of the first Western Province mining venture. More than two centuries ago a man named Mulder forwarded samples of silver to Governor Swellengrebel and asked for capital to open up the proposition. The Governor agreed, and Mulder

lived well. Several large excavations were made. A smelting house was built. Now and again Mulder sent further samples of silver into town; and though the mine never paid its way, official support continued for a long time. In the end it was discovered that Mulder had "salted" the mine with Spanish dollars.

Swellengrebel did not care to admit that he had been fooled in this way, and so Mulder was allowed to go free and the mine closed down quietly. The silver "recovered" by Mulder was worked into a chain to which the keys of the Castle in Cape Town were attached.

Gold prospectors appeared in the Drakenstein Valley towards the end of last century. A "strike" was reported at Kleinberg, near the entrance to the Wemmer's Hoek Valley. All along the river rose the tents of the diggers, while men pounded and panned the ore. The promoter was a great figure in the valley for a time. He wore a bowler hat and gloves, and had a coach and coachman; all curiously familiar when you think of later ventures and

adventures. Some say a few nuggets of gold were found, but not enough to justify the effort. All I know for certain is that the promoter married a girl in the neighbourhood (wrongly reputed to be wealthy) and disappeared with his coach.

As you drive back to Cape Town over Helshoogte, do not fail to observe Banghoek kloof on your left. This is really Banghoek, the old "Corner of Fear". Kolbe was there in the eighteenth century, and he declared: "It is infested with lions and tigers, and leads you on the edge of precipices and pits of water." One of the farms on this road is called "Kyk in die Pot", for the mountainside is so steep that you can almost see down the chimney of the homestead.

Such is the Huguenot country, and at French Hoek the descendants gather round their granite memorial with the Huguenot cross, the zodiac, and the lovely maid standing in humility and yet in triumph amid the wilderness which the Huguenots tamed.

No one loved a new country more than these exiles. Someone searching the Archives long ago came across a story the historians missed; a despatch from France requesting Governor Janssens to find the head of the Du Plessis family and inform him that he had inherited the family estates in France and a dukedom. Landdrost van der Riet traced an old Du Plessis who had the gold sleeve buttons bearing the family crest and other heirlooms and documents proving that he was the senior member. Van der Riet handed him the offer, and asked him whether he would return to France.

"What, return to the country which my forefathers left after so much blood had flowed? Impossible."

"Religious persecution is at an end," pointed out the landdrost. "You will be a duke and a rich man."

"Not for all the money in the world," Du Plessis replied. "I am an Afrikaner, this is my country,

and here I can serve my God freely. What would I do with all that wealth in France?"



"Such is the Huguenot country, and at French Hoek the descendants gather round their granite memorial with the Huguenot cross, the Zodiac, and the lovely maid standing in humility and yet in triumph amid the wilderness which the Huguenots tamed."

"It would help your children."

"The Lord will care for them. We have always had food and clothes. Here we live happily and in peace. Wife, what do you say?"

"I think so too."

"Landdrost, please tell the Governor they can do what they like with the estates and the money. This is my country and here I will die."

CHAPTER 6

ANTJIE SOMERS AND OTHERS

*In die stilte van die droomnag
as die spoke rondomtalie
in die waspoor van die kruispad
staan jy voor my, Antjie Somers*
-D.F. Malherbe.

In every village of the Western Province, generations of naughty young children have been told by their coloured nurses that Antjie Somers would catch them and carry them away in a sack. Is there any truth in this undying tale?

Customs, traditions, superstitions and folklore of the peasant class of all countries include much knowledge of old events which the historians have ignored. Facts are embroidered as time passes, but as a rule there remains a kernel of truth. So it was with the

dreaded Antjie Somers, the man dressed as a woman, the apparition with hare-lip and long front teeth like a baboon. But first you must hear the legend in its different forms.

Sometimes you heard of Antjie Somers posing as a servant in search of work. He would arrive at a lonely home one night when he knew the husband was out, kill the children and plunder the house. Antjie Somers not only attacked children but also lonely wayfarers. He would mingle in ordinary male clothes with farmers returning from the Cape Town market. At the outspan he would note one with money. That night he would lie in wait for his victim along the road, dressed for the part and pretending to be a woman in need of a lift. Then he would menace the farmer with a knife or pistol and rob him.

Several stories of Antjie Somers deal with attempts to hold up doctors. The old Witbruggie which carried so much transport over Hugo's River between Paarl and Wellington appears to have been the scene of

one queer incident, and this tale is related with such wealth of detail that there must be a foundation of truth. Dr. Zeederberg (who had Zeederberg Square named after him) was the intended victim.

It seems that Dr. Zeederberg was crossing the drift by Cape cart one night before the bridge was built when he was hailed by someone in female clothing. During the drive he noticed that his passenger was wearing large brown shoes; and then he realised to his horror that he had given Antjie Somers a lift. However, the doctor kept his head and made a plan. In one version of the story he jerked the reins so hard that Antjie fell out, and the doctor escaped. In another, the doctor purposely dropped a glove. He explained that his horses were so wild that he could not let go the reins, and so Antjie got out and was left behind. A bundle containing two pistols and a sharp knife was found in the doctor's cart.

Antjie used to plead that she was a helpless old woman. Sometimes she would display a

bandaged face, swollen with toothache according to her story, and she would ask the doctor to take her to his house and pull the tooth.

One village has an Antjie Somers based on an incident (which may or may not be true) during the South African War. An English soldier's sweetheart, who usually knew the password, often visited the soldier in camp. One night the password was changed without her knowledge. She gave the old password and a sentry shot her dead. Ever since then a ghostly woman in black goes round at night and carries off little children in her pockets.

Paarl is the main centre for stories of Antjie Somers, though local nursemaids also invoke a dreadful Tant Mietjie as a *skrikbeeld* or bogey. Antjie and Mietjie have become confused with the passing of the years. Tant Mietjie was a real woman, however, and I traced her tragic story in the tattered pages of the "Cape Argus" for March 1862.

Long before that year this spinster named Maria Gildenhuys had gained a reputation as an eccentric. She wandered in the graveyard at night, and startled passers-by who did not expect to see a tall, thin, middle-aged woman perched on a gravestone. Her home was in the main street, near the old Paarl Bank. She seldom went out in daylight, but sat at her window peering round a curtain. The few who called on her had no reason to complain of her hospitality, and she was a lively conversationalist.

On certain nights her embittered nature seemed to take possession of her, and her behaviour was weird indeed. More than once she was seen on the highest tomb in the graveyard wearing horns, clad in white, and with her hair over her shoulders. She frightened the wits out of some people, but a Mr. Abraham Burger identified her.

Mr. C. C. de Villiers, already mentioned as the oldest living attorney on the roll in 1922, recalled that Tant Mietjie was in the habit of

robbing orchards like a schoolboy. She could climb a six-foot wall with ease. De Villiers and his brothers set a trap for her by inserting an emetic into some tempting fruit on the point of a knife. They heard afterwards that she had complained of feeling ill after eating fruit.

One night a stable on the plot where Dr. Beyers had his consulting room was burnt out, and a pair of valuable horses perished in the flames. Tant Mietjie was suspected of incendiarism, but nothing could be proved. These horses were to have drawn the coach taking a bride to church the next day. The bride was a relative of Tant Mietjie - and Tant Mietjie had opposed the marriage.

On a Saturday afternoon in March 1862 a fire broke out in the bushes near the present Paarl railway station. That evening another fire was put out near the Paarl Bank. A Mr. Albertus Louw, who believed that Tant Mietjie had a grudge against him, decided to leave an armed guard on his property behind the bank. Louw gave a white man named Wilbers a shotgun,

and he told his coachman Goliath to help Wilbers. "Catch them alive if you can, but don't let them go," were Louw's orders.

Goliath went to sleep on the Sunday night, but Wilbers was alert. In the early hours of Monday morning he saw a figure in white approaching him. "Go, or I fire," Wilbers shouted. The figure came on with arm upraised, possibly imploring him not to shoot. Wilbers fired. It was Maria Gildenhuys. A doctor was called, but she died two hours later.

Louw and Wilbers were brought before the Paarl magistrate on a charge of manslaughter and committed for trial in Cape Town. The jury acquitted them, which brought forth some scathing remarks from the judge.

That is the true story of poor old misguided Tant Mietjie, who now shares with Antjie Somers the notoriety accorded to witches. "Pasop, Tant Mietjie will catch you." However, nursemaids were frightening children with tales of Antjie for half a century before Tant

Mietjie prowled the dark streets of Paarl in her white dress.

As far back as August 10, 1866 the Bloemfontein "Friend" published an article stating that in the time of Lord Charles Somerset there were two notorious ruffians named Antjie Somers and Antjie Winters, who waylaid people at night and robbed them. I doubt that explanation of Antjie's origin, however, as a result of a story the late Dr. C. Louis Leipoldt once told me. He made an effort to find the origin of the Antjie Somers legend, and I believe that he came very near the truth. Towards the end of last century Leipoldt asked two very old Cape Town personalities named Combrinck and Roubaix whether they could throw any light on the matter. They told him about the Tuin Street spook.

Tuin Street is now the stately Queen Victoria Street, but early last century it was a dark, one-sided thoroughfare overshadowed by huge trees from the Company's Garden, and

with very few houses opposite the garden. It had a bad reputation. Decent people avoided Tuin Street after dark. The sinister atmosphere was not improved when the Dutch East India Company's last official executioner hanged himself there because the British had deprived him of his job.

At full moon a man dressed in female clothing haunted Tuin Street, and all attempts to arrest him failed. He was known as Annetjie, later Antjie, and as he only appeared in summertime the name Somers was tacked on. Antjie Somers knew that he would be caught if he stayed in Tuin Street long enough, so he migrated to the country districts and terrified fresh victims.

As the years passed Antjie Somers became a veritable Boland witch, able to become invisible, flying from village to village, but never taking away more than one child at a time. (The weight of two children would be too much for a person depending on wings on his heels.) But Antjie Somers always knew

where the naughty children lived. "*Pasop, Antjie Somers kom jou vang!*" And the naughty ones decided not to stay out late after all. They went in fear of Antjie. They still do!

Antjie also lives on in certain telling Afrikaans phrases. A person who is dressed unsuitably or in bad taste is liable to arouse the unkind remark: "*Hier kom Antjie Somers.*" Many an innocent Anna has been nicknamed Antjie Somers.

In a land famous for ghosts, the Western Province has its fair share of spooks. Here again one may sometimes find a grain of truth in oft-repeated phantasies.

I cannot account for the "spook wind of Gouda", the strong wind that arises on a calm night between Gouda and Tulbagh, tears the canvas off Cape carts and wagons, rages past the lone traveller and then drops suddenly. Weather experts know nothing of this wind. Yet there are many who will tell you that it is not pure imagination.

Stories of ghostly wagons are common enough, and are probably based on accidents which caused loss of life many years ago. One such wagon is encountered outside Ceres, rushing southwards just before daybreak, drawn by spectral mules. You hear it first, somewhere off the road, bumping over the stones and tearing through the bushes. Then you see the white tent, and as it passes a noise like a thunderclap echoes among the hills. Ten, twelve, fourteen mules with heads down, racing along at full gallop.

If you shout and ask the driver where he is going, you will hear a burst of devilish laughter and the reply: "To hell." The face of the driver is corpse-like. You feel a blast of cold air as the wagon vanishes. But it is a mistake to challenge the *Hellewa* of Ceres. They tell you in the town that the man who does so will be dead within a week.

Every river in the Western Province has a pool where the *watermeid* may be seen. These fresh water mermaids lure people to their deaths as

surely as the Lorelei of the Rhine. But there is a way of avoiding tragedy. Throw back the first fish of the season, cast a small coin, or some fresh fruit, into the pool and you are safe. Ignore the ritual, and the *watermeid* will make a lovely flower grow - and a child will be drowned while trying to reach it.

A famous *watermeid* pool in the Breede River near the bridge on the road to Villiersdorp has been the scene of a number of drownings. According to local legend, one victim must drown just before Christmas and another after the New Year. Then you can swim in the pool in perfect safety for the rest of the year. And there are people in Villiersdorp who will not use the pool until the requisite drownings have occurred.

Years ago, when the bridge was under construction, the builder's son brought lunch for his father every day. Those in Villiersdorp who believe in the supernatural (mostly coloured people, but not all) say that the son fell in love with the *watermeid* and spent all his

spare time talking to her. Unfortunately the father could not see the *watermeid* and thought his son had gone mad. So he sent the boy to a lunatic asylum.

Mad with rage as a result of her loss, the *watermeid* began luring people into the water and drowning them. She has remained bitter ever since. Shortly before Christmas 1953 an immigrant who had laughed at the legend was drowned in the pool. He was an experienced swimmer. Early in 1954 the pool claimed three more victims.

Many a vlei has its ghosts. I know one where a spectral wagon and team of oxen are often reported, trekking across the surface of the water. It is said that the vlei is connected with the sea, which is not far away, by a subterranean passage. A ghostly boat, rowed by sailors in old-fashioned clothes, is also reported at intervals. Possibly this legend owes its origin to a shipwreck long ago.

This vlei has not one *watermeid*, but a lovely choir of them, singing away on moonlight nights and doing no harm to anyone. A queer point about this legend is that a Bushman cave some miles away has a painting in which a number of fish-tailed women are portrayed.

Toordery, and *goëlery*, the old magic of the Hottentots and Malays, has not vanished from the Western Province. Sometimes you may still come across a *stel* put out in the path of an intended victim of witchcraft. The *stel* is a circle, drawn on the earth, with a nail or some other object in the centre. If the victim puts his foot within the circle, then he is bewitched. Ignorant people who believe in *toordery* are indeed seriously influenced. At a scientific meeting the Rev. W. G. Sharples described a coloured man who was gripped immediately by such a pain in the leg that he could hardly walk.

Fortunately there is a root known as the *waarsêer* which acts as a charm against witchcraft. You may also burn the root and see

your enemy in the smoke. Imagination produces wonderful results.

I must not forget the *tokkelossie*, a hairy hobgoblin who comes up to a man's knee. The *tokkelossie* is a mischievous little rascal, though never really malicious. He may spill the milk, but he will not set the house on fire. If you find an unexpected mess in the kitchen one morning, ashes in the fireplace and potato peelings left about untidily, your coloured cook may put the blame on a *tokkelossie*. They like to help themselves to food during the night. Western Province superstitions include a belief that the harmless Death's Head moth is poisonous. This moth is sometimes found in bee-hives, and is known as the *Groot By*, the "big bee" which causes death with its sting. Then there is the Praying Mantis, also called the Hottentot's God, though the Hottentots never regard it with any particular reverence. Sometimes the Praying Mantis seems to be in an aggressive mood. It cannot do the slightest harm, but it is greatly feared. A small,

toothless and inoffensive lizard known as the *geitjie* is also regarded as a killer.

Many flowers of amaryllis species are labelled in the Western Province as *seeroog-blommetjies*. They do not make the eyes sore, but they do flower at the season when many people suffer from eye complaints. Thus do false beliefs arise.

If a barn-owl screeches on the roof of a house, someone will die. So you will hear this owl referred to in the country as the *doodvoël*. And remember that you must never kill a cat unless you are prepared to face seven years' bad luck.

CHAPTER 7

"THE MOUNTAINS OF AFRICA"

When you leave the land of the Huguenots you must cross the great range, snow-clad and sometimes menacing in winter, which Van Riebeeck always called "the mountains of Africa". Nowadays the pass that carries the national road into the interior is Du Toit's Kloof. It is a very old pass which has only

been opened to the motorist in recent years. Each mountain pass, each peak in the Western Province has its story.

Du Toit's Kloof, of course, took its name from the Francois du Toit who settled at his own risk on the far side of the Berg River before the end of the seventeenth century. Inevitably the Bushmen raided his cattle. Du Toit formed a commando, which climbed the mountain in two sections, keeping in touch by trumpet signals, and meeting at a spot which they named Trompetterbos. Then they stormed into the kloof, took the Bushmen by surprise and recovered the cattle.

A clan of tame Bushmen lived near Du Toit's farm, De Kleine Bosch. They were wiped out by the smallpox which played havoc with Bushmen and Hottentots after the white men arrived. One young Bushman survived, and he spent the rest of his life in Du Toit's service. No doubt he acted as guide when Du Toit's sons decided to settle at the far end of the wild kloof. Bushmen hunters and the cattle-

owning Hottentots must have used the kloof for centuries. The new valley chosen by the Du Toits was the place which the Hottentots called Goudini, the "valley of bitter honey", for the bees fed on the *smalblaarblom* which still grows there. It was an adventurous enterprise at that period, but the Du Toits established themselves firmly on land which has since become almost the most valuable farming soil in the country. Francois du Toit travelled over the mountain often to see his sons, and the pass became known as Du Toit's Kloof two and a half centuries ago. According to Du Toit family legend, the wives also rode over on horseback carrying their babies in their arms. Halt on the nek and gaze at another reminder of this bold family - the castellated Du Toit's Kloof Peak, six thousand five hundred feet, at the Goudini end. To the north is Witteberg Peak and the Slanghoek mountains; and between these giants runs the pass. Great Winterhoek rises in the distance. If you climb on these heights, remember the mists. It can be cold, too, with the snows of death, as I shall relate. Mountaineers

know that the snow lies in the gullies even in spring, and that in October you may find sheets of ice four inches thick.



"Francois du Toit travelled over the mountain often to see his sons, and the pass became known as Du Toit's Kloof two and a half centuries ago."

Documents in the archives prove that other farmers secured grazing permits for the land beyond Du Toit's Kloof early in the eighteenth century. A farm in the Goudini area was granted to a Bota in 1714 by Governor de Chavonnes. Gideon du Toit, a son or grandson of Francois, petitioned the Castle for the right to levy a toll on

travellers and cattle-owners using the kloof, for he had built a track. He was successful. Before the seventeenth century was out a woman had started farming at the far end of the pass. She was the Widow Marais, she occupied "De Poort van Du Toit's Kloof", and she fell into arrears with her tax.

Commissioner de Mist, accompanied by the author Lichtenstein, called on Daniel du Toit of Du Toit's Kloof in 1803 and spent a night on his farm. "Our host was seventy-one, but still healthy and active," Lichtenstein recorded. "He was married for a third time to a woman not now more than thirty, who had borne him several children, the youngest being only three. His eldest son was already a grandfather."

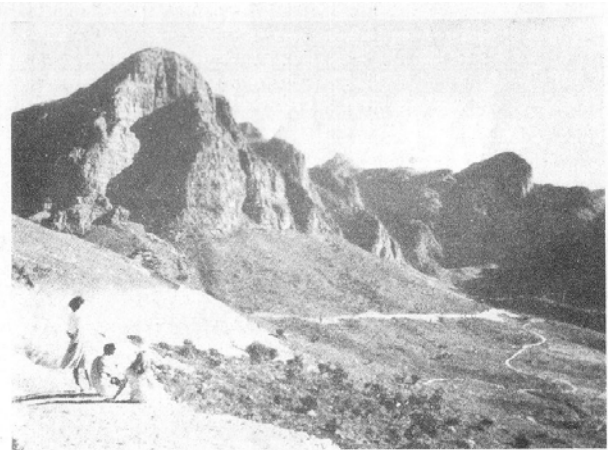
Lichtenstein counted eighty-three descendants of this patriarch. He said the house was comfortable and shaded by oaks, and the fat oxen feeding in the meadows reminded him of the Netherlands. Grapes grew well, and the raisins had the finest flavour in the colony. Du Toit's farm, he added, was formerly known as "the island", because it

was surrounded by mountain streams; and in winter the streams became swollen so that there was no way out.

It was in 1821 that the movement started to make Du Toit's Kloof a real gateway to the interior. And it seems almost incredible that the effort made in that year by Lieutenant Detlef Siegfried Schonfeldt of the Wurtemberg Hussar Regiment should not have brought any result *until the middle of the following century*.

Worcester was laid out in 1820, and the people were given to understand that the Du Toit's Kloof pass would be built so that the new township would be brought within three hours of Cape Town on horseback. Schonfeldt, a daring speculator, saw a chance of making a fortune. He surveyed Du Toit's Kloof and reported that it was the finest place in the colony for a village. It would support thirty families, he declared, with ground for wheat and gardens. A great, pure river ran through the kloof. There was timber for building and wagon-makers. Schonfeldt sold his commission - a pleasant method of raising money which is no

longer in vogue - and bought the kloof. He was under the mistaken impression that the government would start immediately on the construction of the pass. A commission of inquiry reported in favour of the scheme. Lord Charles Somerset turned it down.



"Schonfeldt, a daring speculator, surveyed Du Toit's Kloof and reported that it was the finest place in the colony for a village."

This was one of Somerset's many shady actions, probably the most disastrous as far as the colony was concerned. Somerset was an incorrigible

hunter. So obsessed was he with the hunting lust that he decided to build a pass over the mountains from French Hoek giving easy access to the game paradise of the Riviersonderend region. Two regiments of British soldiers were put to work, and when they were sent out of the country the reckless Somerset wasted thousands of pounds of public money on the unwanted pass. Earl Bathurst reprimanded him. Somerset replied with a blatant lie, stating that the French Hoek pass would open up the country and shorten the journey to the north by three days. He would have been recalled if the truth had leaked out. As it was, he was committed to the French Hoek venture and the urgent appeals from Worcester (and the alarmed Schonfeldt) went into a pigeon-hole.

Schonfeldt discovered at last that if he wanted a road through Du Toit's Kloof he would have to build it himself. He was allowed to raise money in the Worcester district; though some of those who had signed the subscription list failed to hand over the cash. Schonfeldt put the last of his own capital into the venture. It was a heart-breaking struggle in

every way, raising the money and building the road; he was throwing good money after bad, but he did not realise it.

Starting on the Paarl side, Schonfeldt cut the long, slanting track to the nek, a route which can still be traced. Inside the kloof he encountered an obstacle which presented the well-equipped roadmakers of our own time with a serious problem. This is the so-called Kleigat Crag, which is not a mass of clay but a rocky spur of the Haalhoek Sneekop peak. Men said that no road would ever be built round Kleigat. Schonfeldt, however, made a deviation of nearly a thousand yards in the neighbourhood of the present tunnel. His road was rough and dangerous, yet fullyloaded wagons did traverse the whole route.

Men, horses and oxen came to grief. Some men lost their lives. It was a practicable route for cattle, as it had always been. Only a superb wagon-driver could get through, and then it was a memorable feat. Nevertheless, Schonfeldt was able to go to the guilty Lord Charles Somerset with figures showing that

during six months in 1825, more than six thousand cattle, five hundred sheep, three hundred horses, two hundred and fifty horsemen and a few wagons had used the pass. Schonfeldt also mentioned that he had spent eight thousand pounds, and he begged the Governor to find the money for the completion of the work.

Somerset fobbed him off with a right to collect toll for five years; two pence half penny for every horseman and a penny an animal. Farmers in the districts at each end of the kloof were exempt, so that the concession was almost worthless. "As you have refused to build the pass, the road must fail, with my ruin," wrote Schonfeldt to the Governor at last. He ended his days in poverty in a Roeland Street garret, thinking bitterly no doubt of the fame and fortune which might have been his if only he had been helped to build the noble road of his dreams from the farm of Ernst du Toit in Klein Drakenstein to the farm of Jan du Preez of Goudini.

About twenty years passed, and the Worcester people again pressed the government to give them a direct route to Cape Town. Bain's Kloof had not yet been built, of course, and the journey to Worcester was accomplished by way of Tulbagh Kloof or Sir Lowry's Pass. The great Andrew Geddes Bain came on the scene, and pointed out the Du Toit's Kloof rift to the Hon. John Montagu, colonial secretary. Montagu instructed Bain to survey the kloof.

According to local legend Bain was favourably impressed by the kloof. Before leaving he shot a brace of partridges and then found an angry farmer on his trail. Bain explained his mission politely and said he was shooting for the pot; but the farmer refused to be placated.

"If this is the sort of thing that is going to happen when the road is built, then I do not want a road through my farm," declared the farmer.

"All right - you won't get it," retorted Bain. And he reported against the Du Toit's Kloof pass.

There may be some truth in the partridge incident, but I cannot imagine a man of Bain's integrity and professional skill turning down a practicable scheme for such a trivial reason. I have searched Bain's journal, but there is no mention of the affair. It is clear to me that Bain was excited by his discovery of Bain's Kloof and preferred that route from the engineering point of view. When Bain's Kloof was built in 1848, the lovely rival became a forgotten kloof, known to travellers on foot as a short cut from Paarl to Worcester, a silent kloof loved by mountaineers and botanists, and ignored by road planners.

Decades passed, and the early railway construction engineers plodded through Du Toit's Kloof. They were there again shortly before the end of last century. It was thought that the Sprigg Ministry favoured Du Toit's

Kloof as a railway route; but new men came into power and again the kloof was neglected.

Bain's Kloof was not designed for swift motor-traffic. One fatal accident after another caused an outcry in Worcester in 1929, and so the Du Toit's Kloof plan came up again. Town engineers surveyed the kloof; the project was almost approved as a relief work scheme; but Wellington opposed it and the money was not voted. Probably it would not have been built even now if it had not been necessary to find work for thousands of Italian prisoners-of-war.

The man who planned the modern Du Toit's Kloof pass may be a distant relative of the original Francois du Toit. He is Mr. Pieter Agricola de Villiers, a National Road Board engineer. Pieter de Villiers has built a number of passes, including that easy way over the Houw Hoek mountains between Grabouw and Bot River. He also re-designed the French Hoek Pass, which lay abandoned for many years after Lord Charles Somerset's blunder.

De Villiers, a mountaineer on and off duty, had studied Du Toit's Kloof for twenty years before the scheme was finally approved. He saw at once that the Kleigat spur, which had brought about poor Schonfeldt's ruin, could only be defeated by tunnelling. Road engineers in South Africa dislike tunnels; in fact, I believe there is only one other road tunnel in the Cape, the short tunnel on the Cogman's Kloof road. However, the Kleigat tunnel had to be cut, and out of it during seven months of excavation came twenty-five thousand tons of sandstone and quartzite.

Du Toit's Kloof pass, that spectacular highway of twenty-six miles which saves you nine miles of driving between Cape Town and Worcester, cost a million pounds. It may be the scene of a far greater and more expensive task one day, if the railway goes through the kloof at last. A tunnel over a mile long would save five miles of the present route through the kloof, and a climb of thirteen hundred feet. A double-bore

tunnel carrying road and railway through the mountain into Du Toit's Kloof is the next step.

All this engineering forms a strong contrast with the days when Francois du Toit followed the Bushmen cattle-raiders into the kloof. Old foot-paths and wagon-tracks remain as signs of the labour of last century. In the eighteen-eighties a company worked a manganese mine in the kloof, carrying the metal by cableway to a point above Blouvillei near Wellington. From there ox-wagons took the ore to the station. Two boilers rusting in Du Toit's Kloof are relics of this enterprise. Then there is the bridle-path made in 1926 by Mr. Jannie le Roux, a Paarl farmer who cultivated buchu in the kloof. When the buchu market collapsed the farm was abandoned.

Seldom indeed did Du Toit's Kloof appear in the day's news before the pass was built. Once a murderer hid there for a week. If he had stocked a cave with food it might have taken months to find him, but he gave himself up. A small aircraft came to grief there between the

wars. At times the kloof is disturbed by strong cross-currents of air. A wing was torn off, and two men were killed.

One great drama of Du Toit's Kloof was the rescue of George Africa, an eighteen-year-old coloured boy, who was marooned on a ledge with a sheer drop, of five hundred feet below him. He was there from the twenty-ninth of February to the third of March 1932; and his survival was due partly to his own courage and endurance, and largely to the heroism of the rescuers.

The kloof, as I have said, has always been used by foot travellers. George Africa and his ill-fated friend Karel Maart, had just found work in Paarl and were returning to Worcester for their clothes. It had been raining for two days, a thick mist covered the heights, and the two boys lost their way. Somehow they wandered blindly and miserably on to Haalhoek buttress on Sneekop, the five thousand foot peak near the Du Toit's Kloof entrance. Little did they

know that they were approaching a sheer drop. They slipped from rock to rock, clutching at bushes. Then, without warning, Karel Maart went hurtling into space to his death. George Africa fell over the edge, too, and found himself bruised but otherwise unhurt on a ledge four feet long and two feet wide. At the foot of the precipice, five hundred feet below him, he could see the body of his friend.

George Africa rested as best he could that night, licking the mist off his lips and eating leaves. He had lost his bag of food during the fall. "I hoped all the days and I prayed to God all the nights I was there that He would not let me sleep," Africa said afterwards. "I knew that if I slept I would fall off."

In the morning, Tuesday, March the first, George Africa began shouting for help. He knew that Mr. A. P. Retief's farm Keerweder was at the base of the mountain, and he hoped some labourer might hear him. Mr. Retief was on the mountain himself when the shouts fell on his ears faintly. He climbed in the right

direction, and heard a voice saying: "Baas, for God's sake help me!" Mr. Retief could not reach him, but he organised a search party. The rescuers were led by a girl, Miss Elise Siebritz of Paarl, who was neither strong nor a regular mountaineer; but she knew the mountain better than the clergyman, the police and others who accompanied her.

After a severe climb they found the body of Karel Maart in a protea bush. They realised that Maart would have to be buried where he lay, for it was impossible to bring a body down such a steep mountain. A further climb of two hours brought them close to George Africa. They could hear his desperate calls through the mist and rain, but could not see him until they were twenty feet below him. Then they talked to him, but could not reach him. (This was rated by expert mountaineers as an "E" climb; almost the most difficult that can be encountered.)

Everyone was drenched. At times they could not move owing to the mist. The rock face

above the rescuers was smooth as glass, and it was impossible to respond to Africa's piteous appeals for water. Seven rescuers were clinging to a narrow ledge, huddled against the rock face, and trying to dry their sodden clothes on a smouldering fire. One or two members of the party took off their shoes; and gripping the rock with their bare feet they made a little progress. In the end, however, it was clear that Africa would have to be rescued from the top of the buttress. They cheered George Africa as best they could with promises that he would soon be saved. Then they descended the precipice, climbed dangerously by another route and failed to reach the top of the buttress. Exhausted they returned to Keerweder and asked the Mountain Club in Cape Town to call out experienced mountaineers.

The experts set off without delay, as they always do, twelve men with rope and rescue equipment. No one expected to find George Africa alive after such long exposure, but all were determined to reach him. Hundreds of Paarl people climbed to

the foot of the precipice where George Africa was stranded to watch the rescue. Lower down the mountain George's mother waited for news.

One rescuer was lowered with a hemp rope under his arms from the point where George had gone over the brink to the ledge, fifty feet below, where he sat. At first George was too numb to move. Coffee, brandy and massage helped, and after half an hour George was able to climb with a rope round his waist. But it was not easy going. More than two hours passed, a very anxious two hours, with George resting every few steps, drinking hot coffee at intervals, then moving on steadily. His courage, after the long ordeal of waiting, was admired by all who watched. This was the first occasion on which the Mountain Club had been asked to organise a rescue beyond the Cape Peninsula; for nearly all mountain accidents occur on Table Mountain owing to the numbers who climb there. Many who saw the attempts to reach George Africa said that it could not be done. Indeed it was a fine achievement, a tribute to the bravery and technique of the rescuers, when

George Africa was brought to safety and restored to his mother.

George Africa went to hospital, suffering mainly from a sore throat caused by his frantic shouts for help. He told his rescuers that if they had not reached him he would have thrown himself over the cliff rather than die of thirst and exposure.

Early in March every year after that rescue, for fifteen years, there appeared in the Cape Town newspapers a display advertisement headed "Thanks", signed and paid for by George Africa's mother. "During all these years I have not forgotten those who were so kind, and I cannot express my thanks deeply enough to the European and Coloured mountaineers who brought my son back to me," said the mother. "May God keep and bless you all."

Three thousand feet above the foot of Sneekop a heap of stones marks the grave of George Africa's friend Karel Maart.

Once I heard a winter's tale that froze me as I listened, an old tale of blizzard and death that has not been forgotten in the Groot Drakenstein district, the land below Van Riebeeck's "mountains of Africa".

It was at the end of April 1912 that Jan Lotter left the historic farm Normandie with his brothers Mattheus and Dirk and Jack Joubert of Paarl to hunt buck and birds on Wemmer's Hoek mountain. With three coloured men as carriers - Jan Swart, Moos Pieterse and Tookie - they climbed during the night. Four dogs accompanied them. They camped in a cave near Louw's Hoek Kloof, and after two days in the mountains they had shot a number of buck, pheasant and partridges.

May the first dawned with rain, but they went on hunting. That evening they were on their way home, and they made a *skerm* of branches and bushes in a kloof for the last night in the open. "We rolled up in our blankets without a thought of danger," declared Jan Lotter afterwards. "It

was a lovely night, windless and cloudless, with the moon shining clear."

Soon after midnight rain pelted into the *skerm* and they started a fire of *waboomhout* for comfort. By daybreak the rain had stopped. They were making the long descent when hail and snow fell heavily. Streams that had been dry on the way up were now running strongly. Soon a full gale was blowing, an icy gale such as these men had never known in their lives before. All suffered from exposure and some began to weaken. Moos Pieterse was the first to collapse and he was given brandy. Soon afterwards he died in Jan Lotter's arms.

"Brother, you must also help me, or I will go too," muttered Dirk Lotter weakly

"*Ou broer*, if you must die then I will die with you," replied Jan Lotter. Jan dragged his brother to a tree and propped him against the trunk; but then he saw that his brother was dead.

By this time Mattheus Lotter was unable to move. Jan Lotter realised that he and Jack

Joubert must struggle on in an effort to bring help to the survivors. Hand in hand these two men went through the swollen rivers and stumbled down the mountainside with their feet bleeding. They came at last to the farm Winterhoek, where Mr. Jan Celliers put them to bed and organised a search party.

Mattheus Lotter was still alive when Celliers reached him, but he died fifteen minutes later. Tookie was dead. The other coloured man, Jan Swart, could not be found.

At noon on May the third, however, the forty-six year old Jan Swart astounded everyone by appearing suddenly on the Winterhoek farm. His clothes were torn and his body covered with cuts; but before long he was sitting up in bed smoking and describing his escape. Blinded by rain and hail, separated from the rest of the party, he had made up his mind to find shelter before he perished. A dry hole in a rock offered a chance of salvation. Jan Swart went in there with his one and only

blanket and lay there until the blizzard was over.

One of the four dogs survived. It was an Irish terrier, and it had crept inside a haversack thrown away by Joubert. When the searchers arrived the dog would not come out, and so it was carried down the mountain in the haversack.

On the Sunday one week after the hunters had left Normandie the great church hall at Paarl was filled with mourners. Jan Lotter was there, in his socks because of his lacerated feet. Mrs. Mattheus Lotter attended with her six children. Twelve hundred people followed the coffins in the cemetery. Such was the ending of a winter's tale which left a deep impression on all the people of the valley below the snow-capped mountains.

Many of you must have bathed in the Witrivier, one of the most alluring streams in the Western Province when you see it from a

dusty motor-car in midsummer. It runs through Bain's Kloof, forming pools of happy memory. But in winter this mountain stream can be a killer, and there are people in Wellington who remember one such episode.

Some disasters are remembered for centuries by a nation, others plunge a village into sorrow and then pass into the local annals. But there are deaths which are something more than tragedies; the details linger because of some human quality that marked the event. So it was with the Witrivier disaster, and the quality was heroism.

Drive up from Wellington for seven miles to the point where Bain's Kloof leaves the Seven Sisters range and turns eastwards before running north again to the summit of the pass. Here you see the Sneekops of the Slanghoek range, known as Upper and Lower Sneekop, crowned by snow in winter. (They are not to be confused with the Sneekop on the other side of Du Toit's Kloof where George Africa survived his ordeal.) One mile farther on there

is an outspan and a sandy track leading up the hillside and into the Witrivier valley. Mountaineers take that path every year, into the finest rock-climbing region within a hundred miles of Cape Town.

This was the route taken early on May 23, 1895 by two young men, Piet van der Merwe and Carl Pauw, leading Miss Duckitt and another teacher and eleven girls from the Huguenot Seminary. They were bound for Lower Sneekop, which was covered with cloud. Otherwise the weather seemed fair.

It meant crossing the Witrivier, but that morning the stream was only a few yards wide. They stepped from stone to stone, a merry band, little thinking of the ordeal before them. The mist cleared while they were on the mountain, then it thickened again, and some of the party were in favour of abandoning the climb. However, most of them went on and reached the summit at two in the afternoon.

Some of the girls suffered from sore feet during the return journey. The climbers split up, with Piet van der Merwe and five of the strongest girls marching ahead. (With the leading party was a Miss Lombard, later the wife of the Rev. G. S. Murray, and she was in 1953 probably the last survivor of that expedition.) Piet found the Witrivier rising and running faster, but he took all his girls through safely. They went on down to Wellington, reporting at half past eight that night that Pauw's group would soon be home.

Then the rain came. Pauw's group did not arrive, and there was anxiety over the weather. At midnight the first rescue party set out, led by a Mr. Walter Ferguson and Miss T. Campbell. Another party was organised by a Mr. Schaff, a Wellington dairy farmer who had been a sailor. Schaff had the forethought to take a long rope and a basket with him. He knew there would be trouble at the flooded Witrivier, and he planned to rescue the girls by the shipwreck method. Food, brandy,

blankets and lanterns were taken. The climbers had expected to be home the same evening and had only light refreshments with them. Among the rescuers, besides the ingenious Schaff, were several brave young men - Christiaan Krynauw, Lourens van Dyk and his brother Francois, and Izak Joubert. Dr. E. F. du Toit also played an essential part in the rescue. Other active members were Messrs. Willie van Wyk and A. Coaton.

The rescuers arrived at the Witrivier at two in the morning, finding a raging torrent. Snow was lying a foot deep on Table Mountain that night, and a cold rain was lashing down over the Bain's Kloof area. Nevertheless, the rescuers stumbled along the river bank for an hour, blowing a bugle, until they heard answering shouts from the far side. Nothing could be done in the darkness. They lit a fire and waited for daylight.

Pauw and his girls had reached the river too late to cross, of course, and had spent the dark hours without shelter, drenched and stiff with cold. They

had the good sense to wait for help. The girls could never have swum through those roaring waters.

First of all, attempts were made to throw a light rope across the river. All those on the far bank had suffered from exposure so severely that their hands were too numb to hold the rope. Christiaan Krynauw then swam across with the rope at great risk. The heavier rope followed and was made fast to a rock in such a way that it remained almost level with the swiftly-moving stream.

Ferguson, Lourens and Francois van Dyk and Izak Joubert then crossed safely with the aid of the rope, taking food and brandy. After they had revived the girls to some extent, they decided to take them across one at a time. Lettie de Jager, an eighteen-year old pupil who had been the life of the mountaineering party, volunteered to go first.

It seems that the angry river rose still higher while Ferguson, Krynauw and Lourens van Dyk were working the girl painfully along the rope. In midstream a rock offered a dubious refuge for the three exhausted men. They managed to push the

girl on to the rock, while they clung desperately to the rope.

Francois van Dyk saw the peril they were in, and re-entered the water with the idea of helping the girl and his brother. He reached a large bush, lost his grip on the rope, and could go no farther. Ferguson and Joubert regained the river bank at the point where they had started. The brothers Lourens and Francois were helpless. Lourens was seen pointing to the girl, appealing mutely to the other member of the party to save her. As they watched the girl was swept away. Lourens van Dyk went after her, although he must have been almost at his last gasp. Within a few seconds the torrent had carried them out of sight and they were drowned.

Krynauw had reached the rock by this time, but the water surged round him. He soon became unconscious and was swept off. Last to die was Francois van Dyk. Someone threw a rope with such skill that it fell across the bush to which Francois was clinging. He was too far gone to

fasten it round him. He, too, disappeared in the cold welter of that cruel mountain stream.

After this disaster the main rope was moved so that it was suspended well above the flood. Van Wyk, Coaton, Schaff and Dr. du Toit then crossed in a large basket which hung below the rope on a pulley. This contrivance worked admirably, and all the sad and shivering people on the far bank were brought to safety.

Another party was organised to recover the bodies, and this included a young Chris van Niekerk who was to become President of the Senate.

Someone wrote to the "Cape Argus" declaring that the portraits of the heroes and heroine who lost their lives should hang in every household. The only relic of the disaster to be seen today is a memorial stone on the path leading to that tragic spot on the Witrivier, bearing these words: "In memory of the daring and heroism of L. van Dyk, F. van Dyk, C. Krynauw, Lettie de Jager. Witrivier disaster. May 23, 1895."

A long elegy by the pioneer Afrikaans author, C. P. Hoogenhout, of the farm Optenhorst, Bovlei, Wellington, appeared in a Paarl magazine. This was written in Nederlands, and part of it runs:

*Ja, 't is een treurzang voor Lettie de Jager.
Christiaan Krynauw, de broeders Van Dyk;
Stort vrij uw tranen voor 't viertal, o
klager!*

Weet het, zij zijn reeds bij God in Zijn rijk.

CHAPTER 8

OLD CUNNING ONE

After three centuries of hunting only one large killer remains in the animal world of the Western Province mountains. Farmers call it a *karnallie*, a cunning one. The leopard had to be cunning to survive for so long after the extermination of the lion; to live as it does on the very fringe of civilization.

I would be sorry to see the leopard wiped out. It serves a useful purpose as I shall explain, and it is a link with the old and more adventurous Africa. Naturally, the farmer takes a different view. No

doubt he agrees with the late Dr. Austin Roberts, the naturalist, who declared that the leopard was a dangerous animal to meet at any time. "Probably more men have lost their lives when hunting it than when hunting the much larger lion," Roberts asserted. "It has courage and agility, and claws and teeth that inflict terrible wounds."

Everyone called the spotted leopard a *tyger* in the early days, and in Afrikaans this became *tier*. Wherever you go in the Western Province you will find the name of this killer on the map, from the Tygerberg hills (marked like a leopard) to farms and other places called Tierbos or Tierfontein, Tierhoek, Tierklip, Tierkloof, Tiernek, Tierpoort, Tiervlei or Tierkrans. Evidently those who came into contact with a leopard in one way or another did not forget the encounter.

"Whether there are at the Cape genuine tigers, or only tiger-cats, leopards or panthers, is a point greatly debated in Europe, and I am incapable of deciding it," Mentzel wrote in his book published in 1787. "The grenadiers of the Cape garrison wear on their caps instead of a metal plate a shield

of mottled tiger-skin cut from the skins which the colonists hand in and for which they get a reward of ten Rix dollars."

Make no mistake about it now - there are no tigers anywhere in Africa, and there is only one leopard in the Western Province. Farmers sometimes distinguish between a large *vlaktetier*, leopard of the plains, and the smaller *bergtier*; and it is clear that years ago variations in size were noted according to localities. Nevertheless, these leopards belonged to one species. The leopard of the Western Province is an exquisite animal with its yellowish fur, dark brown rosettes and white belly. Not many people have had the privilege of seeing leopard parents with the fawn coloured cubs in the wild state, for the leopard owes its survival to its secretive habits and its silence. The bright fur blends perfectly with its background. Great hunters, Selous and Pretorius and others, confessed that they had never set eyes on a leopard outside a zoo or museum.

Yet every district in the Western Province has its "*Koning van Tiervangers*", the leopard hunter

who has gained his title as a result of family tradition or by sheer necessity. Villiersdorp has a "Leopard King", Mr. J. M. Lingenfelder, who has trained a pack of dogs to destroy leopards. "*Haak!*" he calls at the right moment, and the dogs grip their victim.

Lingenfelder was out on horseback with a young and inexperienced companion one day in the mountains when the dogs picked up the scent of a leopard. A little later the young man found himself staring into the green eyes of a leopard on a rock. Foolishly he dismounted, picked up a stone and threw it at the leopard. Next moment the leopard flashed through the air, slashed the man's face close to the eye, and bit deeply into an arm. Lingenfelder came up with the dogs. "*Haak!*" he yelled. The leopard was torn to pieces in a moment.

A cornered leopard always attacks the hunter, never the dogs. It is a point worth remembering. Dogs always try to secure a grip on the soft, loose skin of the leopard's chest, to prevent it from moving. The leopard tries to counter this form of

attack by lying on its back and defending itself with four dangerous claws. However, a pack of dogs soon overcomes a leopard.

One of the greatest leopard hunters I ever met was the late Mr. Cornelius le Roux of Twee Heuwels, a farm off the beaten track in the grand Slanghoek Valley, not far from the Worcester end of Bain's Kloof. Oom Cornelius had to become a leopard hunter. His land forms a natural pathway for leopards crossing from one mountain range to another. It has been called "Leopard's Lane". When he settled there early this century the farm was a cattle post and every year the leopards were carrying off calves and sheep worth hundreds of golden sovereigns. Oom Cornelius made a plan.

Long before iron traps came on to the market Cape farmers devised the *vanghok*, a stone cage with a trap-door. Oom Cornelius built several cages, one of stone with a sliding iron door running in a groove; the others of iron, and all working on the same principle. Each door was held up by a rope which was

fastened to a wooden stake, and each stake was baited. When a leopard tugged at the bait, the door fell. He added an idea of his own; a flag on a pole, linked with the trap by a wire. All his cages were placed so that he could see the flags with a telescope from his stoep. When a trap was sprung the flag dropped. Such was the plan; gigantic mouse-traps to catch the great cats.

Oom Cornelius also used the conventional, terrifying *slagyster* which imprisons an animal's limb when it takes the bait. And on rare occasions he shot leopards right out in the open after they had been cornered by his dogs. The cunning of the night raiding leopard is matched by its courage when brought to bay in full daylight, for then it will sit back on its haunches and glare defiance.

One day Oom Cornelius came upon a troop of baboons trying to round up a leopard. They are hereditary enemies, for there is nothing a leopard enjoys more than a young baboon, and the baboons know it. However, two full-

grown baboons are a match for a leopard, and when a leopard meets a whole troop it must race for its life. Oom Cornelius fired three shots at that leopard, but it eluded both the man and the baboons.

Leopards remain quiet when trapped by the leg or tail. They are as sensitive to pain as cats, and do not move very much. When a human approaches the trap, however, the leopard will think only of freedom and revenge. Oom Cornelius once found a leopard caught about half way along the tail. It jumped on to the branch of a tree above the trap when it saw him; causing such a strain that the tail snapped. Oom Cornelius raised his rifle, but the leopard was just a yellow flash that vanished. Three years later a leopard with half a tail was trapped on the farm Groenberg near Wellington, on the far side of the mountain range.

Oom Cornelius told me that he had known leopards to chew off their limbs and tails to escape from traps. "Afvoet" was a leopard that got

out of one of his traps with a paw missing. Now and again they came across the unmistakable spoor. Four years afterwards Jan Gerber of Wolseley, another hunter, caught it many miles away.

Jan Gerber and Oom Cornelius once decided to test the old belief that a leopard held fast by the tail will not turn on its capturer. They had caught a leopard in a cage, and there was a heavy boulder on the floor to keep the cage steady. Oom Cornelius wished to remove the boulder so that the cage could be lifted on to a wagon; for the leopard was destined for a zoo. Gerber waited his chance and seized the tail through the bars. Oom Cornelius opened the door and began moving the boulder. The leopard whined and coughed angrily. Gerber held on, knowing that the life of Oom Cornelius depended on his grip.

Suddenly the leopard arched round, contrary to superstition, and slid its claw slowly in the direction of Gerber's hand. Gerber knew that he might have his flesh ripped open, but he took the risk. Then, to his intense relief, he heard a clang.

Oom Cornelius had rolled the boulder out and let the guillotine door of the cage down. Gerber released the leopard's tail and sprang clear of the claws. That leopard went to the Pretoria Zoo, where it was on view for a number of years between the wars. It was known as the "Goudini leopard".

Oom Cornelius shot a female leopard in one of his traps, and removed a pair of live cubs when he was skinning it. They were reared on milk, lived for eight days and showed every sign of growing up normally. Then a servant overlooked the feeding while his master was away, and both cubs died.

Then there was the day when his gun misfired three times while a leopard was trying to wrench its paw out of the trap. Soon the leopard had freed itself. The dogs were mauled. Then it would have been the turn of Oom Cornelius to receive punishment. But the old leopard hunter was not to be defeated so easily. He picked up a heavy log and clubbed the leopard to death.

I asked Oom Cornelius whether he ever felt nervous in the presence of leopards maddened by pain. He replied: "*Nee, ou vriend*, I know no fear but I am becoming more careful. You see, I can't run as fast as I did when I was a young man, and a leopard is no plaything."

One secret of leopard hunting Oom Cornelius revealed to me. "Before he goes off to make a kill, a leopard often sharpens his claws on the bark of a *spekboom*," he declared. "When you find those fresh marks you can set the dogs on the trail."

Oom Cornelius had disposed of fifty leopards by the end of World War II, and it was his ambition to secure a hundred. Sometimes he claimed the official reward of five pounds and handed in the skin, but usually someone paid more than the reward for the skin.

Of course the leopards sometimes defeated Oom Cornelius. One night he lost three calves. On another occasion sixty-three sheep were killed, and one leopard disposed of forty goats. His fifty-ninth leopard escaped, and he discovered that the

hundred-year-old trap he had been using needed a new spring. The next leopard was held fast, and Oom Cornelius thought the new spring had killed it. Then the leopard came to life. Oom Cornelius fell over backwards in surprise, and his son stoned the leopard to death.

That was a fat leopard. Oom Cornelius always found eager customers for the fat. In the Western Province and far beyond, sufferers from gout and rheumatism like to massage their afflicted limbs with leopard fat, a substance which is seldom easy to find. Nevertheless, that is the great cure, though I believe the scarcity of leopard fat has something to do with the firm belief in its marvellous properties.

Oom Cornelius hunted jackals when there were no leopards about. Genets, porcupines and an occasional *muishond* were caught in his traps. He grew fruit and laid out fine vineyards when he was not hunting, so that Twee Heuwels became more than a cattle post in a wild valley. He died in 1952 at the age of seventy-seven, a leopard hunter

almost to the last. Sixty-four was the score when Oom Cornelius passed on.

Beyond the mountain ranges, in the Jonkershoek near Stellenbosch, lived a leopard hunter greater even than Oom Cornelius. I do not know whether they ever met, but I would like to have seen Oom Paul Neethling and Oom Cornelius le Roux together. They would have had a lot to talk about.

Oom Paul was still hunting leopards at the age of eighty-one. He killed one hundred leopards in the mountains where his father and grandfather taught him all the ways of catching the wild beasts that preyed on their cattle. They used traps and also trap-guns that went off when a leopard or hyena tugged at the bait.

Oom Paul's father once followed a hyena to its hole and put the muzzle of his gun inside in the hope of finding it within range. Before he could pull the trigger, the hyena bit the end of the barrel off.

According to Oom Paul, the leopards were larger in the old days. Last century a leopard

killed a strong, full-grown horse on the farm. Another leopard killed a young and valuable bull only four hundred yards from the homestead. Oom Paul's father once lost seventy sheep in a night when a leopard raided the kraal.



Jonkershoek is in the leopard area, and once you could hear the coughs of the leopards near the homesteads at night.

Oom Paul's farm is called Assegaaibos, and it is seven miles from Stellenbosch and not far from the farm Jonkershoek (developed by

Oom Paul's grandfather), now in possession of the Department of Forestry. As a small boy, Oom Paul heard the harsh coughs of the leopards near the homestead at night. He was fifteen when he shot his first leopard. Some years ago he claimed a record leopard - nine feet three inches from nose to tip of tail. (Anything over seven feet ranks as a large specimen.) Oom Paul liked to shoot a few baboons when he was baiting his traps, for he regarded all other flesh as inferior.

This raises an important point which farmers are inclined to overlook on the more or less rare occasions when their stock is carried off by leopards. Many naturalists are opposed to the extermination of the leopard tribe. They point out that leopards keep down baboons, dassies and jackals.

It is the shocking blood-lust of the leopard, when it kills more than it can eat, which has turned the farmer against it. The leopards' palate longs, like Dracula, for hot blood; his greed is a thirst. I remember the farmers of

the Scotland area in the Cold Bokkeveld banding themselves together soon after World War II to end the leopard menace. They lost so many sheep that they were prepared to pay twenty-five pounds for every leopard killed. That was five times the government reward.

It was the same in Mentzel's day. "If it gets a chance of raiding a sheep kraal at night it wreaks great destruction inside," he wrote. "For it is not satisfied with one sheep, but strikes down many and drinks their blood. It then carries one off to consume the flesh. A tiger once attempted to jump into a cattle kraal belonging to a farmer known to me, but as the oxen immediately scented it and probably also saw the tiger's head and its flashing eyes, they all jumped up, gathered together and placed their heads with the horns facing forward, and the tiger withdrew. A slave who had noticed that the oxen were restless had opened a window in the slave-house and saw this happening."

Leopards are cannibals. Oom Cornelius le Roux once found the remains of a leopard near one of his iron traps. It had escaped, but in such poor shape that another leopard had attacked and eaten it. Other items which a leopard enjoys are the various antelopes, pigs, antbears, porcupines, guinea fowl, small rodents and dogs. They like putting their kill in a forked tree where scavengers will not reach it, and they return to this larder when the meat has decomposed.

Are there man-eating leopards in South Africa? It is hard to find proof, but the late Mr. J. G. van Alphen, when magistrate of Worcester, assured me that he had discovered the record of one man-eater in that district. The attacks occurred many years ago, and four coloured women and two children were killed during a reign of terror before the leopard was hunted down and shot.

In a struggle with a leopard an unarmed man stands a much greater chance of survival than the man who finds himself grappling with a

lion. I think the classic fight of this sort occurred in the Bain's Kloof mountains. Mr. van Alphen told me the story. A bachelor farmer lived in a stone hut near the Bain's Kloof summit during the 'eighties of last century. Leopards have always found it easy to live in those mountains; they are not rare today. The bachelor lost his goats and kids in such numbers that he became desperate. Night after night he was out with his gun, but the raids went on. Poor though he was, he went to Worcester at last and bought a heavy iron leopard trap with a ten-foot chain and pole. That night he set it near the goat kraal and went to bed.

In the morning the trap had vanished. The spoor showed that it had been dragged away by a leopard. Soon the farmer was on the trail with his muzzle-loader, accompanied by a coloured labourer. The leopard had not gone far. In the thick bush they heard it snarling and saw it with one hind leg gripped in the iron teeth of the trap. As I have said, this is

the moment when every trapped leopard makes a supreme effort to escape, regardless of pain. Many a cornered leopard has freed itself at the last moment. This leopard jumped at the farmer, tore its leg out of the trap, and became a deadly menace. The farmer fired and missed. Man and leopard rolled over together. "Kill him with your knife," the farmer shouted, but the terrified labourer had run away.

Close to the scene of this life or death struggle was a precipice. The farmer realised that he would be torn to pieces if he remained within reach of the leopard's claws, and he decided to take drastic action before he became weak through loss of blood. He gripped the leopard tightly in his arms, stumbled along the old wagon-track until he could see the river-bed two hundred feet below, and then kicked the leopard over the edge. It fell on the jagged rocks and was killed.

The farmer collapsed when he reached Bain's Kloof, but a Cape cart driver picked him up and took him to Dr. Marais of Wellington. In spite of

prompt attention, the lacerations did not heal - a common experience in those days before penicillin. However, the bachelor's friends pitched a tent at Brandvlei near Worcester, and helped him to bathe in the hot springs every day. Nature or the water healed him, and weeks later he returned to his stone hut. But never again did he see the labourer who had left him to fight a wounded leopard alone.

Leeufontein is a farm in the Ceres district. The lions were killed off early last century, but a leopard which attacked the Van Rensburgs of Leeufontein a few years ago will be remembered for the rest of this century. Mr. Jan van Rensburg with his wife and thirty-year-old son Andries were only a hundred yards from the house when the dogs started barking at a large male leopard.

George, youngest son of the family, had gone for a walk in a kloof with his dog a little earlier. The dog had put up a leopard about a mile from the homestead and caused it to run in the direction of the house. So the parents and Andries were

investigating the commotion when the leopard broke cover.

Andries threw a heavy stone, but failed to stop the leopard. To the horror of the unarmed men, the leopard then sprang at Mrs. van Rensburg, mauling her arm and throat. Andries was determined to save his mother's life. He tackled the leopard with a bluegum bough as his only weapon, while his father gripped the leopard's tail. At first Andries hammered the leopard with his bare fists. He received a painful bite on the left hand, but he succeeded in drawing the leopard away from his mother. Then he used the timber with such fury that the leopard fell dead. It was the first time in his life that he had seen a leopard. Mother and son went to hospital together.

A teacher at Tulbagh, finding a leopard in a trap on a farm, bound its feet with an ox riem and drove it from school to school in a motorcar. His idea was to give the children an unusual natural history lesson. He was charged with cruelty, but was found not guilty.

Leopards may sometimes be observed sunning themselves on the rocks above Bain's Kloof. I must add, however, that the visitor who went there looking for leopards might have to wait years before his ambition was satisfied. One night in May 1946 a party in a motorcar returning to Worcester over Bain's Kloof saw a full-grown leopard spring into the headlights. The mudguard struck the leopard, but it was not seriously hurt for it dashed off into the darkness. In June that year another leopard was seen by motorists in Michell's Pass. Cold weather often drives leopards down from the remote mountain heights in search of food.

I suppose the leopard will be wiped out at last, just as the lions vanished. Traps and guns and cages, dogs and strychnine pills - what large animal could survive such a campaign? It had no enemies before man came on the scene, and so the leopard tribe is spread out over Africa and still lives from North Africa to the mountains within sight of Table Bay. Here in the south the leopard is doomed. But it will go

slowly, fighting with tooth and claw as it goes. Long after it has been proclaimed extinct, scattered families of leopards will live on precariously here and there in the Western Province mountains. I think the last leopard will not have been caught by the end of this century.

CHAPTER 9

UNDER THE SNOW PEAKS

All the high peaks of Van Riebeeck's "mountains of Africa" were deep in snow last time I drove to Tulbagh, but in the valley between the great ranges of the Witzenberg and Winterhoek the white houses seemed warm and mellow under the sun. I had left the old Huguenot districts only to find myself in the land of the Thérons. In two hours I had passed through the old wine country and the wheat, and come to mountain slopes and vineyards where the white wines are better than the red; orchards where the prune is king and the apricot is queen.

Did you know that Tulbagh was once called Tulpiesdorp? Some people in the village of today have never heard the nickname, given when the Cape tulips were flowering more plentifully in the spring. Tulbagh was holding September flower-shows as long ago as the 'eighties of last century. I found a report of a special train which carried people from Cape Town in 1891 to attend one show in the Dutch Reformed Church parsonage grounds. Awards were made for the most gorgeous bridal bouquet and the finest displays of Tulbagh ferns, heaths and dried grasses, nosegays and sets of vases. Even in those days the Tulbagh people were striving to protect their wild flowers, for they were among the first to realise the danger of exterminating rare species.

This district sent bulbs to Europe in Governor Ryk van Tulbagh's time. In fact, the Swedish naturalist Linnaeus named the genus *Tulbaghia*, lilies with yellow and mauve clusters, after the benevolent governor. (One of them was the plant now known as *wilde knoflok*, wild garlic.) And

Linnaeus wrote back to the governor: "May you be fully aware of your own fortunate lot not only in being permitted by the Supreme Disposer of Events to inhabit but also to enjoy the sovereign control of that paradise upon earth, the Cape of Good Hope, which the Creator has enriched with His choicest wonders."

Those who prefer to see spring wild flowers through motorcar windows may find Tulbagh disappointing, for in this district some of the most beautiful plants grow in the cloud-belt. True, there are vleis where the chinchinchees rise knee-high, where there are *gousblom* of many colours, scarlet *bobbejaantjies*, white arums and *rooipypies*. Green ixia, an iris grown in many pots in England last century, is becoming rare at Tulbagh; but this is the pride of local flower-lovers, for it is confined almost entirely to the Tulbagh district. The flowers are called *klossies*, a name probably derived from *klokkies*, little bells. They are usually a livid green, like verdigris, with spikes a foot long; but you may find pale blue or lilac flowers. At one

time the corms were exported on such a scale that there was danger of extermination, and South African gardeners had to re-import the bulbs from Europe. Intensive cultivation of the Tulbagh valley has not helped the green ixia.

If Tulbagh lacks roadside displays of flowers, it has great wealth in the mountains. Here is South Africa's national flower, the protea, in many forms. On the open slopes are thickets of *zeaboom* (*Protea grandiflora*) with yellow-green flower-heads. Between four and five thousand feet the true sugar bush (*Protea mellifera*) is found. And there is a high rock face on Great Winterhoek where one of the rarest of all proteas grows: *Protea Dykei*, which is at home on four widely separated mountain summits and nowhere else. This straggling plant with its club-shaped leaves survives the rigorous conditions of the high places. It has a handsome flower, a large yellow-white head; but not many have seen it.

Some proteas are tiny, others grow to a height of twenty feet. Mr. E. G. van der Merwe, a Tulbagh school teacher, has been sowing the seeds of the

rarer proteas in the mountains year after year for decades. Thanks to his efforts the giant woolly-bearded protea, with its soft white hairs and black centre, is being revived. He sows the Marloth protea, too, greenish-crimson when in flower; the slender, wine-coloured "mountain rose" protea and the "blushing bride".

The king protea, which is protected nowadays, is grown on some of the farms. It has the largest flower of all the proteas, twelve inches or more in diameter. The king protea flowers in April, as a rule, and the queen blooms in September. Sugarbirds know the nectar to be found in the pink flower heads of the king protea.

School children at Tulbagh have learned to appreciate the wild flowers. They help Mr. van der Merwe in the sowing and the picking for the spring wild flower show. Every year in September these children receive a special flower picking holiday; the only pupils in the Cape with such a privilege. Not more than twelve blooms of any one protected flower are picked for the show.

Probably the rarest flower displayed at the Tulbagh show from time to time is the spider orchid with its creamy white flowers tinged with violet. A variety which flowers in early summer (*Bartholina Ethelae Bolus*) is the rarest of all. It was named by Dr. Bolus after his daughter, who discovered it. Tulbagh also displays the red-tongued satyrium occasionally, also known as *oop-en-toe*. And you will probably see other flowers with amusing Afrikaans names: the purple disas called *Oupa pyp in die bek* and the green flowers called *ghitaartjies* because they strum against one another in the veld breeze.

Kapokberg, to the west of Tulbagh, owes its name to the silky, yellow-white flowers of the wild cotton plant that grows there. It is an isolated type, and Marloth regarded it as one of those ancient forms which gave the Cape region so much individuality. Cushions were stuffed with this plant in the old days.

I have mentioned Pieter Potter, the surveyor who mapped the unknown Paarl valley three centuries

ago. He accompanied Sergeant van Hawarden on another expedition a year later, a tragic journey for two men who died of dysentery and another who was maimed for life by a lion. As usual, they were out for elephant tusks and ostrich feathers, musk, civet, gold and precious stones.

Somewhere near the site of the present Gouda village Potter was sent ahead with three white men, two Hottentots and rations for three days. His orders were to cross the mountains as soon as possible to see whether there were any natives (and cattle, naturally) on the far side. Potter pierced the "mountains of Africa" for the first time on this journey. He missed the Tulbagh Pass of today, but climbed the range before him and entered the present Tulbagh valley; a "large, broad and beautiful valley fully an hour's walk across", which, however, he considered unsuitable for agriculture.

Willem Adriaan van der Stel was the next on the scene, in the last year of the seventeenth century. This governor who was called "the father of the stock farmer" was looking for a hinterland where

cattle posts could be established. Already the Stellenbosch and Drakenstein people were complaining that their farms were too small, and there were other landless men clamouring for grants. Willem Adriaan crossed into the valley by the pass which he named Roodezand (because of the red sandstone) and saw the possibilities immediately. He called the new settlement "Het Land van Waveren" after a family in Holland; and he named a mountain Witzenberg in honour of Nicolaas Witzen, burgomaster of Amsterdam.

Soon a corporal and six men were guarding the valley, and in the rainy season of the year 1700 the first settlers moved in. They had left their wives and families behind to avoid the most severe hardships. Most of the pioneers were new arrivals from Holland; but three months later more settlers arrived, and there were Huguenots among them. Early grants show that a Philip du Pree received the farm Artois, while Jean Joubert was at Montpelier. Among other pioneers were Laurens Verbrugge and Theunis Botha. And, of course, Jacob, the first of the Therons, arrived in

those parts. I do not know why the Theron's should have multiplied to a greater extent than other old Tulbagh families; but one name in six in the telephone list is a Theron, and the last census showed an even greater proportion of Theron's.

Isolated by the mountain barrier, these people of the frontier developed a love of independence. Some said they were lawless and irreligious. It was impossible for them to go to church except at long intervals, and when Baron van Imhoff visited them in 1743 he reported: "They were more like a collection of heathens than a colony of Europeans and Christians."

Nevertheless, it is on record that mothers rode over the Roodezand Pass on horseback with their babies for christening at Paarl. Sometimes the parents waited until there were several children, for it was no easy journey. Wagons had to be taken apart and carried over the pass on oxen.

Imhoff authorised a church and parsonage, and so the Roodezandskerk came into being, to the great joy of the settlers. The Rev. Arnoldus Mauritius

Meiring was asked to leave a ship bound for the Dutch East Indies and serve as minister in the Land of Waveren. No longer was there the danger of *verwilderings*, the demoralisation of a remote people. A *kerkraad* was appointed, Jacobus and Pieter Theron acting as deacons.

They tell you at Tulbagh that the most fascinating museum piece at the Volksmuseum is the building itself. This is the original church, of course, with the "anno 1743" on the gable. It is now the oldest church building still standing in the country, and probably the oldest Protestant church in the southern hemisphere. Artists gaze entranced at the simple Greek cross pattern of the restful House of God within its pillared walls. The design was unusual at the Cape, a strong contrast with the austere Calvinistic "meeting house" plan in vogue at that time. It is possible that the architect had been in the service of the Dutch East India Company in some studied Eastern colony where he had studied Portuguese

churches. That is the style of the Roodezandskerk.

For half a century, the village of Roodezandskerk consisted of this church, the *pastorie*, the dwellings of the sick-comforter and the sexton. There was also a military post house, which Pieter de Vos bought for four thousand gulden (with sixty morgen) when the garrison departed. The first *Pastorie* must have been a rough cottage and it soon caved in; but in 1769 a magnificent building was provided; the very building (restored in recent years), which the present minister occupies. Ugly modern additions such as the striped iron roof on the stoep have been removed. This is the original *Pastorie* again; and like the church it is the oldest parsonage in the land. It has five lovely gables, old doors of yellowwood and kiaat, ancient sash windows and panelled shutters. Hundreds of Batavian tiles went into the building. In the garden stands the minister's wine cellar, a relic of the days when every

country parsonage had its own small farm. Later the wine cellar became a school.

Among the ministers who lived in this gracious home was the Rev. Michiel Vos, the second Afrikaner to become a minister of religion. An orphan and a cripple, he pleaded so often for a chance to study in Europe that the president of the *Weeskamer* threatened to drive him away from his office with a stick. Vos finally married a wealthy girl who paid for his education. He had to leave his wife for six years to take the course in Utrecht; then, after visiting England and the Dutch East Indies, he came home. Vos was a great worker among the slaves. Some people thought it would be impossible to maintain control over the slaves if they were given even an elementary religious education. In his first sermon Vos reminded the Tulbagh slave-owners of their obligations, and the time came when his congregation agreed with his views. Thunberg the Swede was at Roodezand in 1795, and he

remarked that the place was the key to the country behind the chain of mountains. Most of the remote farmers who visited the Cape once a year passed through the settlement. Thunberg found a surgeon of sorts at Roodezand, making a handsome income out of his apothecary's shop. A purging powder cost half a rix dollar. "Several in the abundance of their friendship endeavoured to persuade me to establish myself here, but that love I have to botany and my native country prevented me from accepting," noted Dr. Thunberg.

Only at the end of the eighteenth century did Roodezand begin to take shape as a village. Building sites were sold between the church and the parsonage, along the present Church Street. Lichtenstein; in 1803, found a row of a dozen small houses sheltering handicraft workers and small traders who made a good living. The Rev. H. W. Ballot was the minister. People brought their children from the faraway Roggeveld, Bokkeveld and Hantam to be baptised. Mrs. Ballot was "mild and amiable"

according to Lichtenstein. Forty families were living in the valley. Wheat produced there was the best in the colony, and in great demand in Cape Town.

Governor Janssens split up the Stellenbosch district soon after Lichtenstein's visit and named the northern half Tulbagh. Thus the Drostdy came to be built, the famed Drostdy designed by Thibault.⁴ This genius from France was a pupil of the royal architect Gabriel, designer of the Petit Trianon at Versailles. Thibault was hard to please. He lived for his work, bringing the classical tradition of France in the late eighteenth century into the Cape scene. Lady Anne Barnard mentioned him as the only man at the Cape who could wield a pencil.

⁴ Cape Peninsula buildings attributed to Thibault include the Koopmans de Wet House, Old Supreme Court, Kat balcony and Governor's portico at the Castle, Goede Hoop lodge and Groot Constantia wine cellar. Vredenhof at Paarl, Uitkyk near Mulder's Vlei and the Landdrost's house at Graaff-Reinet were among his country buildings.

So the Drostdy at Tulbagh is regarded by experts as one of the finest examples of early architecture in the Cape, ranking with the Castle, the Old Town House, Government House and Groot Constantia. It was the last important building authorised by the Batavian Republic, and was planned not only as the Landdrost's residence, but also as the council chamber for the Landdrost and. Heemraden, and as a gaol as well. Janssens had in mind a retreat to Tulbagh when threatened by the British attack; and enormous quantities of biscuits were baked at the Drostdy for his army. I believe they were eaten by British troops who went to Tulbagh to hoist the flag after the second British occupation.

So the unfinished Drostdy was completed by the British. It stands on a low hill commanding a wide sweep of country and facing a panorama of mountains. The site was on the farm Rietvlei, bought from Hercules du Pre for about a hundred pounds; and the eight thousand pounds spent on the building was regarded as a princely amount.

Thibault transplanted some of his own Provence when he built the wide loggia of the Drostdy with rounded arches framing memorable views. So much rich timber went into the rooms, teak and cedar, yellowwood floors and stinkwood rafters, that it gleamed like a Stradivarius.

When I visited the Drostdy a few months before the fire, the many-paned windows still revealed the opal and rose of the original glass. In design it was a long parallelogram containing two rows of apartments with a corridor between. From the portico, at the top of the long flight of steps, you entered the stately old Raadsaal, the council chamber. This hall and four other lofty rooms had folding doors so that the Drostdy could be opened up from end to end, a most impressive arrangement, admirable for entertaining large numbers of guests.

Besides the apartments for the Landdrost and his family, these other rooms were occupied by the secretary, the messenger of the court, and the policeman. Thousands were spent on the massive cellar, which was barred and used as a gaol. In

later years the gaol became a wine cellar, but you can still see the trap-door leading from the house to this dungeon. At various times last century ploughmen turned up the skeletons of prisoners, identified by the fetters they wore. It was the custom to bury a convict in his chains until the government stopped it on the ground of expense.

Furniture of superb workmanship, rustbanks and magnificent cut-glass chandeliers found their proper setting in the huge Drostdy rooms. The ground plan was completely different from other Cape mansions. No wonder Dorothea Fairbridge wrote: "I know of no house which for spaciousness and airy coolness can compare with the Tulbagh Drostdy."

Soon after the Drostdy was completed the Landdrost secured permission to sell part of the estate so that various types of artisan could settle in the neighbourhood. A new village grew up, and this became known as the New Drostdy while the official residence was called De Oude Drostdy.

So the large district (much larger than the present Tulbagh magistracy) was ruled from the Drostdy until 1822, when the great storm in July devastated the Cape countryside. "Every building, public and private, in this beautiful spot is either totally destroyed or uninhabitable," said the official report from Tulbagh to the governor. "The bridge has gone and the road over the mountains has been made unserviceable for a long time." Lord Charles Somerset jumped to the conclusion that the Drostdy had been wrecked, and hastily transferred the seat of district government to Worcester.

This stupid ruling was challenged immediately by the Tulbagh people, and a Mr. Pieter Theron, a former landdrost, went to Cape Town to make a personal protest. He pointed out that all the roads in the district, the routes to the Roggeveld, Bokkeveld and the Karoo, converged on Tulbagh, and that the Worcester farmers had to pass through Tulbagh on their way to Cape Town. In winter, when the rivers

were in flood, Tulbagh was accessible while Worcester was often isolated. Finally he argued that Tulbagh had an old, settled population, with more than fifty houses, whereas Worcester was a tiny hamlet of three cottages, with six or seven inhabitants. But it was useless. Lord Charles Somerset never listened to the voice of reason.

The lovely Tulbagh Drostdy was sold for eight hundred pounds. But the first private owner had no intention of living there, although the building had survived the storm with only slight damage. He first offered the material to anyone who would demolish the Drostdy and remove it. No one accepted, so the building was turned into a barn. The owner worked about a thousand acres of the Drostdy land, while other farmers leased the rest of the property. The hired land was treated so badly that two feet of topsoil were lost during last century. And for three quarters of a century the Drostdy lay derelict. Truly the years of its glory had been short.

De Oude Drostdy slumbered through the nineteenth century with sacks of grain piled high on the once-polished floors and rats frolicking over the ballroom. Happily, in 1903, there came at last an owner who appreciated this sleeping beauty. Tulbagh owes much to the Becks, a wealthy and influential couple who honoured the past with the devotion shown by Mrs. A. F. Trotter, Dorothea Fairbridge, Dr. Mary Cook and others. It has been said with some truth that the greatest defenders of the Afrikaner heritage in architecture have been English women and English-speaking South Africans. However, Sir Meiring Beck and Lady Beck were both Afrikaners, deeply rooted in the soil.

Sir Meiring Beck, born in Worcester, distinguished himself in both medicine and surgery at Edinburgh. He was a fine diagnostician, and the pioneer of the X-ray at the Cape. Lady Beck was a Miss May Kuys. Beck had practised successfully in Kimberley

during the diamond boom. Early this century he was able to retire from medicine and devote himself to politics. In the Old Cape House he represented a large constituency which included Worcester, Ceres and Tulbagh; and in 1903 he bought the Old Drostdy and went to live in Tulbagh. By a coincidence, Beck and his wife were both descendants of Tulbagh ministers. Beck's great-great-grandfather was the Meiring I have already mentioned; and the third Dutch Reformed minister sent from Holland to Tulbagh was the Rev. A. J. Kuys, great-grandfather of May Beck. The knighthood was granted in recognition of Beck's services at the National Convention which framed the Act of Union.

When the Becks started the restoration of the Drostdy, the interior was a ruin. Partitions had to be torn out, walls plastered. One craftsman spent three weeks removing seven coats of paint from the front door, so that the old camphor wood could be seen again, and its

fragrance savoured. Beck had paid £5,500 for the Drostdy and one thousand acres, which was not regarded as a bargain price in those days. The restoration cost thousands more.

At the Drostdy the Becks observed the traditional Cape hospitality. "As the flowers bring beauty and the colour of life to the lonely valleys of Tulbagh, so the presence of Dr. Beck and his family has brought back kindly hospitality and all sweet human uses to the old Drostdy," wrote a friend. Beck was a pianist. He and his three daughters formed a talented orchestra. Mrs. Beck painted the Tulbagh scenes and the wild flowers. Olive Schreiner stayed there with her cage of meerkats. Once again the folding doors were flung back and the house opened from end to end while Beck played the grand piano.

This great home became a treasure-house of old Cape furniture at a time when a shrewd collector might still acquire fine and historic pieces at bargain prices. I suppose the Drostdy before the fire was the richest private store of

armoires and kists, carved benches and other antiques, old Cape silver and brass, in the country. Often I congratulate myself on my good fortune in having seen that home before the fire.

Sir Meiring Beck died in 1919. The Drostdy was the home of Lady Beck and Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Nellmapius when I called early in 1934. The farm was producing fifty to sixty leaguers of the light white wine first made successfully by Sir Meiring Beck. In the orchards were seven thousand trees, peaches and apricots, prunes and pears. Wheat and Turkish tobacco were grown. Jersey cattle and sheep could be watched through the iridescent windows. I saw the heirlooms, the swords and snuff-boxes, valuable books and papers.

One night six months later Mr. Nellmapius was just going to bed when he heard a thud. The thatched house was ablaze, and the dining-room roof had just fallen in. With a strong east wind blowing there was no hope for the Drostdy, and Lady Beck and the others only

just escaped in their night clothes. Nothing under the thatch could be saved. Antiques worth thousands were burnt that night. Only the four walls of the Drostdy remained standing.⁵

Yet some of the treasures of the Drostdy escaped the fire. I have already described the Roodezand church of 1743 which adorns Tulbagh, the oldest church building in the land. Like other majestic relics, this church narrowly escaped destruction. There was talk of a public auction. Someone offered the church authorities two pounds for the pulpit, not one of Anreith's pulpits but still a masterpiece in stinkwood and yellowwood.

Lady Beck saved the situation by persuading the Kerkraad to hand the church over to a board of trustees as a gift to the nation. She wrote thousands of letters, raised funds for the

⁵ Within a year Mr. Nellmapius had restored the Drostdy, but the building was not a replica of Thibault's design. Black-painted galvanised iron was used instead of the dangerous thatch.

restoration, collected exhibits and organised the "Oude Kerk Volksmuseum in 't Land van Waveren" which was opened in 1926. Many of her own treasures from the Drostdy went into the museum. Thus her generosity was rewarded, for the fire could not touch these heirlooms.

When they restored the church a slate floor was laid over the old clay floor which used to be smeared with *mis* before each service. This was just as well. Below the floor are many graves, including those of four ministers of the church; and there was a time, during a period of neglect, when the church was used as a school, and the children sitting on wooden benches found the clay giving way beneath them. I was assured by Mr. A. P. Kriel, the curator, that the children often fell into the graves!

Among the pieces of historic furniture in the Volksmuseum is the round table on which the terms of the capitulation of the Cape were drawn up in 1806 and signed by the English

and Dutch generals. I liked the armoire with the secret drawers, though I do not think it would defy a modern burglar for long. And I admired the old Cape silver from the Drostdy; the silver bell and the inkstand bearing the anchor mark of Combrink the elder.

A panoramic photograph of Tulbagh village taken almost a century ago by one Dickson held me for some time. Every house was thatched and built in the old style. There was not a jarring note in the picture. It was the perfect Western Province village. Then came an unhappy period when old things, old buildings were condemned as old-fashioned. Safe, hot zinc roofs took the place of snug but combustible thatch. Only here and there does true beauty linger, though secluded Tulbagh has more of it than most places.

Tulbagh museum also shows you the clothes of long ago. It is remarkable that a yellow brocade dress worn by the wife of the Rev. A. J. Kuys (third minister of the church) in 1777

should have survived. Yet there it is with her bag and silk purse.

Spices were expensive in the early eighteenth century. The museum has a metal spice box from the Drostdy, with a lock on it. A mirror once owned by Adam Tas is much older. It was used in the dining-room, and a slave stood with his back to the table gazing into the mirror to see whether the guests needed anything. That was considered more respectful than breathing down a diner's neck like a modern waiter. I noticed, too, a glass bearing the Dutch East India Company's VOC monogram; a *bokaal* or goblet valued at a hundred guineas. Antique dealers are not absolutely sure whether there was such a thing as VOC glass, though they have identified many recent fakes.

Probably the most valuable single item in the Volksmuseum is a kist from the Drostdy given by Lady Beck. It must have been a ship's chest at one time, made in the Dutch East Indies from some hard timber which furniture experts

have been unable to name. But a dealer in such objects put a price to it - seven hundred guineas.

As I left the old church-museum I stared again at the gable, probably decorated by some Malay slave craftsman. Near the top is a queer mask, all the more fantastic as a church ornament. I think it must have escaped the notice of the Kerkraad when that baroque gable was added at the end of the eighteenth century. And so the Malay had his little joke at the expense of his Christian masters.

The museum stands at one end of Church Street and the old parsonage at the other. Farmers coming into the dorp on Saturdays were not allowed to drive their carts or wagons along Church Street, as they might have disturbed the minister while composing his sermon.

Half way down Church Street (formerly known as Onderstraat), there is another fine old building, in all probability designed by

Thibault. This is De Wet House, a national monument like the Volksmuseum, built in 1812 for the widow of Jacobus de Wet. It was falling into decay in 1950 when Dr. Mary Cook saw the danger. As a result of her report it was bought and restored by Sir Alfred Beit. A double flight of steps lead to the high stoep. The two-storied facade is in the Louis XVI tradition with fluted pilasters and cornice, and finished with a parapet and flat roof. It looks more like a wealthy man's town house than a Tulbagh residence, but like other houses in the village it has a cellar. I think they were afraid the Little Berg River, which flows at the bottom of the gardens, would flood the houses one wet winter. The rooms are spacious. In the kitchen ceiling the beams are placed in diamond formation, with brick arches between - an unusual method of fireproofing.

Other interesting old houses in Tulbagh are the public library, with its spiral chimney, and a cottage on the other side of the street. Once there was another gracious parsonage at

Kruisvallei, but this was destroyed by fire only a few days after the Drostdy disaster. It was a single-storey house with large gables, built towards the end of the eighteenth century. Dr. Zuidmeer, the owner, had filled it with antiques, but these were saved.

Tulbagh had unhappy experiences with some of its ministers of religion last century. In this quiet valley there raged for years the most serious controversy the Dutch Reformed Church at the Cape had known up to that time. The culprit was the Rev. Robert Shand, a Scot with such a narrow outlook that his sermons and his actions plunged Tulbagh into a fever of resentment.

Shand was inducted in 1835 as the successor to the Rev. George Thom, an able man who had become subject to occasional fits of insanity. Ministers at that period were paid by the government; thus the governor had considerable influence in church affairs. Shand insulted his congregation in his very first sermon, for he disliked some of the clothes worn by the women and denounced these fashions in strong terms.

Soon afterwards he refused to give the usual blessing, telling his astounded congregation: "How can I bless you, who are cursed by Almighty God?"

Although the Tulbagh people observed the ordinary Sunday rules faithfully, there were times when they failed to please such a fiery sabbatarian as Shand. Thus a man named Zinn, who had been obliged to travel on a Sunday, met with a refusal when he asked Shand to officiate at his marriage. Fortunately there was another Dutch Reformed Church minister, the well-known Rev. Henry Sutherland, in Tulbagh at the time; and he took the unusual step of marrying Zinn in a private house.

Five weeks after his arrival Shand turned on his own sexton, one Conradie, who had gone to Cape Town by ox-wagon and done part of the trek on a Sunday. Shand would not baptise Conradie's child. Other worthy members of the congregation were refused the Sacraments because they were not regarded by Shand, for one reason or another, as "children of God". Before long there were

thirty babies awaiting baptism in Tulbagh, causing their parents much anxiety. It was a long journey for a mother and baby to Worcester or Paarl. The parents became not only worried but indignant.

No doubt Shand was absolutely sincere in his beliefs, and there must have been some who held the same extreme views. His was a grim faith which makes men strong rather than lovable. When he accused some of the people of having dealings with the devil, Shand meant what he said. This sad state of affairs might not have lasted so long if Tulbagh had not been so isolated. As it was, five stormy months passed before the *kerkraad* complained to the Ring, the church authorities in Cape Town.

Shand was suspended until such time as the Synod could consider the matter. A kindly and pleasant minister, the Rev. Hubertus Moorrees, was sent to Tulbagh and peace reigned in the valley for a time. Unfortunately, when the Synod met in October 1837, it was decided that Shand should be warned and reinstated.

Such a determined character as Shand could not be changed by warnings. Very soon Tulbagh was again in turmoil. Petitions for the removal of Shand were sent to England, but in vain. The Ring would not transfer him. Sir George Napier became governor, and he was reluctant to interfere with the authority of the church in what he regarded as a purely religious matter. Nevertheless, the appeals from Tulbagh must have been hard to refuse. One letter read: "You may probably prevent the entire ruin of this devoted congregation. If Mr. Shand be continued as minister, no good whatever but the greatest ungodliness and confusion must follow from his ministry among us."

So there grew up in Tulbagh a movement in favour of founding a new congregation with a minister of their own choice. Such a daring scheme had never been attempted in the Cape before. It seemed too ambitious, and there was the question of the minister's salary. However, at a public meeting in 1843 about half Shand's

congregation decided to take this drastic step and break away, whatever sacrifice might be necessary.

The seceding members bought the farm Kruisvallei one and a half miles from Tulbagh, and guaranteed the minister's salary. Moorrees accepted the post, and told his people that he would be happy to serve them whatever it might cost him. The doctrine and forms of service at Kruisvallei were identical with those of the Dutch Reformed Church; but the new church was not represented at the Synod and it received no aid from the government. The first church was the wagon-shed on Kruisvallei farm. Moorrees preached his powerful sermons from a large wooden box that served as pulpit.

Moorrees remained at Kruisvallei until his death in 1866. He was succeeded by the Rev. J. H. M. Kock, and a permanent church was built during Kock's period of service.

Strange to say, the turbulent Shand held on to his post until 1871, when he retired. All that

time, and for many years afterwards, the people of Tulbagh were split into *Onderkerkers* (supporters of Shand and the original church) and *Bokerkers* (the Kruisvallei congregation). It was a tragic division for the small community, affecting many people from birth to death. As far as I have been able to gather, no one ever changed from one church to another except a bride, who went to her husband's church. A man could change his political allegiance without much comment, but a *Bokerker* did not become an *Onderkerker*; it was not done.

The breach caused by Shand was healed to a large extent in 1895 when the Kruisvallei congregation decided unanimously to rejoin the Dutch Reformed Church. But the two congregations remained until 1935, when the people of Tulbagh again worshipped in one church. Kruisvallei is used for the ordinary services, while the Tulbagh church is mainly devoted to Sunday school classes and funerals. Almost a century had passed since

that unfortunate day when the Rev. Robert Shand gazed upon the stylish dresses of the Tulbagh women and saw sin where there was innocence. The great Langenhoven commented on the affair as recently as 1934, possibly with some mild bias in favour of the *Bokerkers*. He received a sharp letter from an *Onderkerker* pointing out that he was obviously unaware of all the facts in this painful story. I hope that time has healed the breach, or I shall be in trouble myself - and without Langenhoven's skill in self-defence.

I mentioned a minister named Kock as successor to the Rev. Hubertus Moorrees. Kock lived alone at Kruisvallei, and for four or five years he carried out his duties in the normal way. Early in January 1872 he disappeared. January is a blazing month in Tulbagh as a rule; but that year the weather was cold and there was heavy rain. Kock reached home drenched on the evening of January the fifth, drank a cup of milk and told his servants not to come in to the usual

household prayers. He then retired to his study.

In the morning he had gone. His money was lying on the bureau, he had locked up his dog and left the study light burning. The mystery baffled everyone who knew him, for he had preached his usual short and lucid sermons on Christmas Day, on the last day of the Old Year and on New Year's Day.

Almost every healthy adult male in Tulbagh turned out for the search. *Bokerkers* and *Onderkerkers* traversed the Witzenberg range. The weather was severe and many feared that the missing clergyman would die from exposure. A police constable followed tracks on the banks of the Klein Berg River, where someone had crossed and re-crossed the stream. Then he found a coloured woman who had seen a man in black clothes at that spot two days after Kock's disappearance. So the search went on.

Five days passed, and then a searcher identified Kock at Heuningberg, where the Twenty-four Rivers meet the Great Berg River. He was weak and exhausted. Some time later he told his friends that he had felt impelled to wander in the solitude of the mountains, abstaining from food, for eight days. He soon recovered his mental balance, but he retired owing to ill-health two years later.

Another more tragic event which disturbed Tulbagh last century was the murder of Mr. and Mrs. Botma, a young couple at Kruisvallei, by a Mozambique labourer named Adrien Batist. The murderer first decoyed Botma away from his home with a story that a friend was seriously ill and calling for help. Botma was clubbed to death on the veld. Then the murderer returned to the house, raped and killed the wife.

I believe that the execution of Batist in 1861 was the last at Tulbagh to be held in public. Dr. William Simpson, a brother of the Sir James Simpson who discovered chloroform,

was district surgeon at the time. He attended all executions in that capacity. At the hanging of Batist there was some difficulty with the rope. Simpson took charge of the proceedings himself, adjusted the knot and gave the signal for the trap to be sprung.

Executions at Tulbagh were carried out on the hill to the west of the village. The spot where the gallows stood is known as Galgenveld to this day. Possibly there were one or two at the execution of Batist who had seen a slave hanged in the same place at the end of the eighteenth century. This slave worked for Leendert Haasbroek, the sexton. One day Haasbroek reprimanded the slave for leaving dust on the pulpit, chandeliers and foot-warmers. The slave cut Haasbroek's throat, but not before Haasbroek had assured him that he would pay for the crime "even if the crows told the story".

It was easy to escape justice in those days by taking refuge in the mountains or beyond the borders of the colony. For years the murderer

went free. Then one day a noisy flock of crows disturbed him while he was resting under a tree. He remembered the sexton's vow and gave himself up.

Haasbroek's widow was given the post of sexton, probably the only woman sexton ever appointed at the Cape. She carried out such duties as caring for the graves, opening the bibles before a service, and arranging the seating in church. An assistant named Weideman dug the graves.

Men on horseback carried the mails to and from Tulbagh twice weekly at the beginning of last century. Fifty years later there was a goods' wagon service. I heard stories of the Tulbagh of that period at first-hand (in 1920) from Mr. Ludwig Wiener, then a man of over eighty. Mr. Wiener, of course, gave his name to the public holiday known as "St. Wiener's Day". He set up in business as a general merchant at Tulbagh in 1855, travelling there in a wagon drawn by six horses. Most of the rivers were without bridges; but between Michell's Pass and Bain's Kloof was the Darling Bridge and an hotel kept by two

Irishmen named Furney and Swain. These cheerful hosts told Wiener a story of Sir George Grey, the Governor, who had stopped at their hotel for a meal.

"Why do you charge extra for eggs?" inquired Sir George Grey. "Are they scarce here?"

"No sir, but governors are," replied Swain.

By 1860 the road through Tulbagh Kloof had been greatly improved, and in that year a bridge (named Munnik's Bridge, after the magistrate) was opened by Miss Munnik. Tulbagh's first hotel was receiving guests the following year.

Tulbagh has always organised good bazaars. I have a description of a bazaar more than three quarters of a century ago, showing that the pleasant atmosphere and homely warmth prevailed in those days, too. "The rolling of heavy wagons with offerings of farm produce, the unusual gatherings of people from the farms and the groups in the streets has given the dorp an air of life and stir," wrote a resident. "Decorations of weeping willow festooned the walls. There was a

grand array of pretty girls, the room was full of the aroma of pastry and everyone was munching buns or tarts. The stock sale was immense. A sheep mildly bleated while its value was bid up to fifty pounds and a little porker grunted to a five pound note."

During the 'eighties of last century fifty burghers were drawn for military service, but many vanished before they could be called up. That was a depression period, when wine fell as low as thirty-five shillings a leaguer. Coloured labourers had to work for three pence and sixpence a day.

Tulbagh has grown a little this century, but it has remained a happy and secluded dorp, no longer jealous of Worcester. It is the unspoilt church and school centre, a place which cannot be expected to develop much more, a wise and tranquil old place which does not wish to encourage the ugly forms of progress.

Vogelvei is the sort of enterprise Tulbagh favours. The worm-shaped vlei, where the old

travellers shot wild duck from punts, is near the Tulbagh Kloof entrance, just to the south of Gouda village. The new reservoir, which cost half a million pounds, diverts water from the Kleinberg River and provides more water in summer for the industrial area near the Berg River mouth. Vogelvllei has become a lake and a wild life sanctuary. There you find the pelican and *korhaan*, sandpiper and flamingo and many other water fowl. At one time the Retiefs owned this valley, and descendants of the Voortrekker Piet Retief still live there.

Among the famous old farms of the Tulbagh district is one with an unusual name. De Twee Jonge Gezellen, mentioned in documents of 1725 as a loan farm, was worked by two friends who had parted in Holland and come together again unexpectedly at the Cape. One had arrived from Holland, the other from Batavia. They had not met for thirty years. Since then other partners have farmed De Twee Jonge Gezellen, and according to tradition they have always been successful.

CHAPTER 10

TRAPPES PLANNED A TOWN

Pass from Tulbagh between the mountains and along the Breede River to the bult where the spire of the Dutch Reformed Church at Worcester rises like the mast of a tall ship coming over a land horizon. Here are more landscapes for the brush of a master, but not so many of those old homesteads that Gwelo Goodman loved to paint.

Worcester district is old as hunting grounds and cattle runs go in the Cape, but new as a settled area of vineyards and fruit trees. I have been unable to trace the discoverer of the site on which Worcester town now stands, and I have an idea that this explorer left no record. Possibly he was one of those adventurous Du Toits who made their homes on the far side of Du Toit's Kloof before the end of the seventeenth century. Certainly there were cattle farms in the district very early in the eighteenth century. Hercules du Pre was there, at Roman's River; and in the Slanghoek a farm called Verrekyker (because of its view) was granted to Etienne Bruere. It was

the water that drew them to this outpost, the Breede River and the unfailing streams from the mountains.

Roman's River and the satellite farm of Die Liefde are still there. Veldkornet Hugo was the owner early last century, a famous host and wine farmer. Hugo made a lasting impression on many travellers who recorded the luxuries of his table and his luscious wine of Madeira type. Burchell and his companion Polemann, however, had an unfortunate experience in this district when a farmer named Du Plessis boasted that he made wine as good as any in the colony. It was the sourest wine they had ever drunk, but Burchell did not wish to offend his host, and so he made a sign to Polemann to pretend he was enjoying it. Polemann then drank half a glass with difficulty. By this time Du Plessis had tasted the wine and found to his dismay that he had offered his guests vinegar. Du Plessis fetched a bottle of excellent wine, taking the precaution of tasting it; but Polemann did not see the humour of the

situation, and he reproached Burchell for inducing him to drink the vinegar.

Smuts called this rich valley of fruit and wine "the original great rift valley of Africa". It runs between the sheer escarpments of the Drakenstein and Hex River mountains; a valley forty miles long and seldom more than three or four miles wide. These farms have karoo soil, which must have slipped down from the plateau when the country was taking shape. Geologists have discovered that the town of Worcester stands on the bed of an ancient lake.

Landdrost Fischer of Tulbagh was the man Lord Charles Somerset selected to buy the Worcester town site. Fischer seems to have had an eye for beauty. He inspected a site which the government had chosen, and then recommended another more pleasing stretch of country on the farms Lange Rug and Roode Draai. His choice was approved, and the government paid £3500 to the Du Toit brothers who owned the farms. The place, of course, was named by Lord Charles in his autocratic

way after his elder brother, the Marquis of Worcester.

It was a perfect town site, on a sloping, well-drained plain. Through it ran a road of adventure, the old track to the north, the karoo track. Captain Charles Trappes was responsible for the planning of the town. A dubious character in some ways, he had influence with the Governor. It was rumoured that he had come to the Cape after being thrown out of the Portuguese service for tyranny. Trappes, however, was far in advance of his time when he laid out the wide streets and town blocks with vision and a high regard for squares. As you saunter through the oldest part of Worcester you may form an impression of a town without gardens. Nothing could be more deceptive. Trappes made the early builders put the houses close to the streets. Behind the houses are gardens with an abundance of trees and fruit, flowers and vegetables equal to anything the Western Province can display; gardens watered generously by the Hex River

mountain snows and streams. The old farmer who settles in town, according to South African custom, never loses touch with the seasons.

A town in the Worcester area was inevitable, but it was the 1822 storm I have already mentioned which led to the building of the palatial Drostdy and the transfer of the landdrost from Tulbagh. The building, so different in type from anything seen in the platteland before, cost a fortune. Wagon after wagon arrived from Knysna loaded with timber. So much was left over that builders of private houses secured yellowwood on favourable terms. You can still see this superb timber in old ceilings and floors.

Search the records for the facts about the Worcester Drostdy, and you find details of a queer piece of extravagance. William Jones, inspector of public works, drew the plans from a rough sketch provided by Trappes, but the place appears to have been altered considerably during the building. At times everyone

seems to have been nervous in case the Governor might denounce them for the size of the great house. The upper storey appears to have been an afterthought. Trappes made the ground floor higher than the building planned by Jones, and he also varied the sizes of doors and windows. Walls of small, unburnt bricks, with yellowwood frameworks, were of impressive thickness. Iron balconies were wrought by skilled craftsmen. Massive pillars at the entrance and the flights of steps suggested a Greek influence; but architects regard the rounded wings as Gregorian in style. Only the thatched roof belonged to the Cape tradition, and that roof was so well laid that part of it lasted for over a century.

Trappes made light of the expense, though it was obvious that the district could have been administered from a much less imposing structure. Slave-owners were shocked to find that they had to pay the cost in the form of a new tax on slaves. That brought in £2,250 in three years. The Drostdy should have been a

freak in view of the haphazard methods of construction. In fact, it turned out to be a handsome building, a grand memorial to Captain Trappes.

Lord Charles Somerset found the comfort of the Drostdy very much to his taste during occasional shooting trips in the Worcester district. In his day, and long afterwards, most of the farms were cattle posts. The bush had not yet been cleared, and game was abundant. Farmers drove their Afrikander oxen and sheep over Roodezand or Hottentot's Holland Pass to market; and usually their wagons were piled high with skins of buck. Only during the first half of last century did many farmers from the more civilised side of the "mountains of Africa" turn their cattle posts into permanent abodes. No doubt their families had grown by that time to an extent which forced some of them to till virgin soil in the Worcester valley. Slanghoek, not far from the present Rawsonville, was an example of this movement. It was first granted in 1722, but it

was not until 1850 that Jan Rossouw, the owner, settled there permanently and gave his nine sons a farm apiece. Elsewhere in the district, however, there are white gables which show that the *hartbeeshuisies* of the cattle posts were abandoned early last century; for a number of these fine houses have dates between 1806 and 1820 moulded into the plaster.

Worcester does not belong to one or two clans. If you want to turn the heads of a street full of people in Worcester you would have to shout: "Naude! De Wet! Van der Merwe! Conradie! Stofberg! Du Toit! Rabie! Botha! Viljoen! Hugo!" You might then be out of breath, but you would have covered a large section of the population of the district.

James Backhouse, the Quaker traveller, found thirteen hundred people living in the rising town of Worcester in 1840. Four years later a newspaper stated that Mr. William Watson was running one of the best hotels in the country there. Bishop Gray, in the middle of last century, said the houses were a great distance from each

other, and the Drostdy, where he stayed, was too large for any private person. He thought it would make an admirable college, little knowing that long afterwards it was to become an industrial school.

In the gaol Bishop Gray spoke to the only prisoner, a farmer who had beaten his wife to death when drunk, and had become insane through remorse. One of the bishop's visitors was an English farmer who had travelled one hundred and thirty miles and wished to be confirmed. He had not seen an English clergyman for years.

Worcester's hardest times, I think, were the drought years during the 'sixties of last century. One valuable farm of two hundred morgen was sold for five hundred pounds. Dirk de Vos, a wealthy Roggeveld farmer, had settled in town and built a house on one morgen. That property cost him £2400, a small fortune at the time. But when he died during the drought the whole estate fetched only £725. You could buy eggs at nine-pence a dozen and the best wine at £4 a leaguer.

The first diamond rush restored prosperity for a time, as Worcester lay on the route and the railway had not yet been opened. But prices fell again during the depression of the 'eighties. Many leading farmers went insolvent with dried peaches at two-pence a pound, beef at three-pence, ham at five-pence and wool at four-pence. A whole pig cost eight shillings and an ostrich with feathers only five shillings. The owner of the Commercial Hotel sold out, lock, stock and barrel, for fifteen hundred pounds. A double-storied house in town could be bought for three hundred. Worcester tightened its belt, and prosperity returned in the 'nineties, when the price of a leaguer of brandy rose to sixteen or eighteen pounds. A farmer could pay his way on those prices.

Worcester has won such renown for its grapes and wine, sauces and dried fruits, that I shall pass by the huge factories and cellars and show you a little industry that you might overlook. In a good year Worcester sends out calabash pipes in thousands and tens of thousands.

South Africans have never taken to the calabash pipe, though it gives a cool, slow smoke lasting for an hour: This is an export trade. Gentlemen of Edwardian England (including King Edward VII himself) loved the calabash. The Prince of Wales smoked a calabash during his South African tour. Austria has been one of Worcester's best customers for many years, and the pipes are given a *meerschau* finish in Vienna. Though the calabash has passed its zenith (which was probably during World War I) Worcester has no reason to complain of lack of demand.

Van Riebeeck sent to the Dutch East Indies for the original calabash seed, but the gourds were not used to any extent as pipes until early this century. Seed has always been a problem since the Worcester pipe-making industry started. After one slump there was so little seed to be found in the Western Province that the Department of Agriculture had to send to Kew Gardens and China for supplies. Nowadays the seed is guarded as jealously as South West

Africa hoards its karakul breeding stock. Mr. H. C. Karstel, the Worcester calabash king, rations out the seed to farmers who promise to sell him their crop. Steps are taken to see that no calabash seed is smuggled out of the country. Worcester has a monopoly of this trade, and it is not anxious to encourage competitors.

Calabash farming, according to the few who know how to do it, is one of the most profitable forms of agriculture in the world. Mr. Fanie Bruwer of Aan-de-Doorns, five miles from Worcester, estimated a few years ago that he was making from one hundred to one thousand pounds a morgen a year from his calabash crop. The ground needs plenty of water, for calabashes are grown like pumpkins. Every few days, at the right time of day, the soft gourds have to be turned so that they take the desired curved shape. After cutting they are boiled on the farms until they turn yellow. The factory in Worcester does the polishing and the lining of the bowl with Hex River clay.

Years ago the whole of South Africa was scoured for timber suitable for pipe-making. Every war means a pipe shortage, and it was thought that the calabash was Africa's only hope in the pipe trade. However, another first-class wood was found not long before World War II. This was *waboom*, the protea which has provided so much fuel for camp-fires. A *waboom* pipe is almost equal to a French briar. Some of the *waboom* timber shipped to Britain during World War II returned to the Union in the shape of pipes bearing the insignia of famous British firms. Worcester now manufactures *waboom* pipes as well as calabashes. The wood is hard and odourless.

Worcester wagon-makers have shut up shop, though you will still find plenty of them in the town and rich with their memories. But I doubt whether many people will remember the days when Worcester had the audacity to set up a whisky distillery. I believe that some products belong to certain regions and cannot be imitated successfully elsewhere. Possibly the

Scots might turn out a Van der Hum (or Worcester hock?) which would deceive some people in a blindfold test; but they have the good sense to abstain from such tomfoolery.

It was early this century that a Mr. James Rattery decided to try his hand at making whisky at Worcester. It was a wine spirit product, labelled Club Whisky. Mr. Rattery gave up in 1906, when distillation of whiskies from wine spirit was prohibited. Since then it has been suggested that the peaty waters of the Brandwag Mountains are so like those of Scotland that Worcester might try again, using a grain base, which is legal. I believe that some of the machinery used in the celebrated Sammy Marks whisky distillery in the Transvaal has found its way to Worcester. Whatever happens, I shall stick to the full-bodied wines, the Frontignac and Muscadel and Pontac which have made Worcester famous.

Not many Western Province towns had fire brigades seventy years ago. Worcester was the first to buy a fire engine, and Mr. de Wit acted

as *brandkaptein*, assisted by eighteen volunteers. It was not very tiring work, for Worcester had an average of three fire alarms a year; and for one period of seven years there were no fires. However, the volunteers were paid "retainers" of five shillings a month with an extra three shillings for every fire. They hauled the fire engine to the fire without the aid of horses. On arrival the well-drilled team dammed up the nearest water-furrow with sacks and boulders. Then the hand-operated pumps came into action. Leather hoses were used; strong but heavy when soaked with water. Mr. Bill Harris held the post of fire chief in Worcester for fifty-six years. Worcester's fire alarm for many years was the old bell in the tower on Voortrekker Square. An electric siren was provided some time ago, but the bell still serves a useful purpose. It is the equivalent of Cape Town's noon gun. Every day for nearly a century an old coloured worker in the municipal service has rung the bell.

Worcester was called "German Town" in the 'sixties and 'seventies of last century as the result

of a forgotten little immigration scheme. The origin may be found in the Rhenish Mission started by the Rev. L. F. Esselen; for he and the Germans with him wrote to friends and relations in Germany; informing them of the opportunities in the Worcester district. Farmers offered German labourers two-year contracts with free passages and free housing, and welcomed married men with children. A private enterprise sold farms on easy terms at one pound a morgen, equipping each German settler with two tents, a plough, a cow and seed.

These settlers worked hard, but few of them remained on the land. Their sons joined the police or the new railway service. Many finished their contracts and then opened businesses of their own in Worcester and other places.

Outside Worcester, to the north, you will find a rise marked Gallow's Hill on the map. (At Tulbagh, you will remember, it is Galgenveld.) Such grim places are always remembered, though there has not been a public execution at Worcester for nearly a century. I believe Toontje was the last

to be hanged there, with Sutherland and Esselen, two great ministers of their day, giving the doomed man what consolation they could. The rope snapped. Toontje was kept waiting until a riem was found. Then, according to a newspaper report, he was "soon hurried into eternity"

Hanging can be pure torture when the technique is faulty, and that happens often enough. It is a disreputable business, and everyone shuns the hangman. I recall a deputy sheriff of Worcester, Mr. Frederick Lindenberg, who served in that office from 1885 to 1945, and attended every execution in Worcester gaol during that period. His most difficult task was to find lodgings for the visiting hangman. Landladies would not have them. Mr. Lindenberg also noted the fact that hangmen did not last very long; they soon gave up the job for reasons best known to themselves. Was it shame?

Mr. Lindenberg told me that he was nervous the first time he had to attend an execution, and asked the district surgeon for advice. The doctor recommended whisky. This did not suit

Mr. Lindenberg, so he faced the ordeal without any stimulant and remained calm. But the doctor, who had followed his own advice, was so excited after the execution that for some time he was unable to decide whether the man they had hanged was alive or dead!

Another old Worcester resident who brought back the past for me was Mr. G. H. W. (Oom Gertjie) Keyter,⁶ mayor and town councillor for many years. Mr. Keyter was the "tortoise king" of the town. In his private zoo he kept eight buck and two hundred tortoises. One huge mountain tortoise had been with Oom Gertjie for more than half a century at the time of my visit. I learned that tortoise eggs were palatable if you boiled them for twenty minutes and served them like penguin eggs.

Oom Gertjie had another hobby. Throughout his long life he collected bent nails and straightened them. Some years ago a leading article appeared in the London "Times"

congratulating Oom Gertjie on setting up a world record by filling eighty large barrels with the nails he had straightened.

Old Worcester lives on in the Afrikaner Museum, housed in a grand little thatched cottage in Church Street. This is an armoury and an old-fashioned kitchen; a Victorian dress salon and a china-ware and pottery showroom; a place where the treasures of many an old homestead are stored.

In the museum are many relics of the South African War. Several ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church at Worcester volunteered to go into exile with the Boer prisoners-of-war on St. Helena, Bermuda and Ceylon. After the war the church tackled the difficult problem of educating a number of these young fighting men, most of them over twenty years of age, who were still in standard four or five. They could not attend government schools, so the Drostdy was taken over for the purpose.

⁶ Mr. Keyter died in 1956 at the age of eighty-six.

All former prisoners-of-war were given free education, board and lodging. Seventy young men enrolled, and my friend Mr. P. G. M. Scholtz joined the staff as a teacher. He told me that no coloured labour was employed; the young men made their own beds, scrubbed the floors and peeled potatoes before starting the day's classes. They laid the tables for meals and washed up. After school hours they dug the large garden and grew their own vegetables. It was austere living, for the church funds could hardly bear the strain. "Pumpkin jam and fruit on Sundays were the only luxuries," recalled Mr. Scholtz. "After a time the church was forced to charge a boarding fee of six pounds a year, later raised to twelve."

Some of the young men passed two or three standards a year. Several qualified for missionary work, while others went on to the old Victoria College and South African College and gained degrees. A number of ex-prisoners secured certificates as teachers. Dr. Muir, director of education, made good use of their

services by sending them into the North West Cape, where there was much illiteracy. The starting salary which they cheerfully accepted was five pounds a month.

One landmark outside Worcester which I miss every time I pass that way is Barclay's Farm, a lovely homestead that stood at a bend of the road to Brandwag. It was built very early last century. Henry Barclay, a London dentist, bought the place 'in the 'sixties and started farming.

Barclay knew all about rose growing, a most unprofitable pursuit last century, and nothing about farming. He covered his land with roses, and every distinguished visitor called and admired this show-place. The shooting was good, too, and it was a fine life while it lasted. Barclay lost so much on the farm, however, that he had to return to his professional work. He was Worcester's first qualified dentist, and there may still be a few old people who remember seeing him driving into town every

morning in his trap. Many gardeners have grown "Barclay" roses.

Barclay's Farm housed Italian prisoners during World War II. One night the thatch caught fire, and the homestead was destroyed after adorning the landscape for one hundred and forty years. Not far from Barclay's Farm there is a reminder of a more primitive era, the "elephant rock", smoothed and polished by generations of tuskers that rubbed themselves against it after bathing in the pools close at hand.

Four miles from Worcester on the Villiersdorp road is a sheet of water called Marais Lake (or Brandvlei), large enough to support a yacht club. Beyond the lake are the Brandvlei hot springs, mentioned by the old travellers. Ferdinand Appel, an enterprising farmer, tried to establish a health resort at the springs as far back as the early eighteenth century. He laid out a farm at great cost, but lost money. Sick colonists preferred the springs now known as Galedon.

Mentzel tried the Brandvlei springs and found that the water was so hot at the source that it could not be used until it had cooled off. He was absolutely right. Animals have jumped into that boiling pot at various times and have been scalded to death. Burchell traced the course of the stream flowing out of the pond for over a mile by the cloud of steam hovering over it.

Henry Lichtenstein thought that the spring, with its bubbling water and vapour, resembled an immense boiling kettle. The water flowed into a canal at the rate of four hogsheads a minute. (It is now regarded as the strongest single thermal spring in the world, with two hundred and fifty gallons of water gushing out every minute at a temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit.) Lichtenstein admired the clear, tasteless, colourless water and declared that faded plants and leaves, when held in it for a few moments, were perfectly revived. He tested it with eggs and found to his surprise that they would not harden in spite of the great

heat. Four invalids were living in a small house close by in 1803 when Lichtenstein called. "None of the patients could boast of much amendment," Lichtenstein reported.

Brandvlei spring is radio-active, and it has been compared with the well-known Warm Springs, Georgia, a great centre for the treatment of infantile paralysis. The two springs are alike in that the water comes up at a great rate; both are radio-active; and both show an absence of minerality.

I have an old official pamphlet which states that the Brandvlei spring possesses no curative value, whereas the Goudini spring not far away is strongly recommended. Dr. M. M. Rindl, the analytical chemist who surveyed the medicinal springs of South Africa some years ago, classed Brandvlei as "indifferent", meaning that it contains only very small quantities of solid substances in solution. He said that Brandvlei seemed to have fallen into discredit in recent times; whereas Montagu, which

belongs to the same class, had been highly praised.

Goudini, also an "indifferent" spring, has had a great local reputation for a century and a half. The first owner of the farm where this spring emerges was J. P. Jordaan, grandfather of Lord Henry de Villiers. Jordaan's son-in-law, Theunis Botha, developed the spring; and one Botha after another improved the baths. A section used by coloured patients is still known as the "slave bath", which suggests that such ailments as rheumatism and gout were not confined to the ruling classes early last century.

Bushmen and Hottentots used the mineral springs of the Cape long before Van Riebeeck's landing. Indeed, these springs probably represent the earliest form of medical treatment known to mankind. Dr. Rindl found that the South African springs, besides the "indifferent" waters, fell into the classes known as earthy, alkaline, iron or chalybeate, salt and sulphur.

What are the merits of these mineral springs in which so many invalids claim to find relief? Qualified medical opinion, I gather, varies from cynical disbelief to enthusiastic support. The fact is that the healing action of the various types of springs is still largely a mystery. Radio activity is not the answer, for this is small indeed compared with the quantities used by radiologists in hospitals. "Cures are due to faith and exercise," many doctors will tell you. Mineral springs often lie amid pleasant, healthy surroundings where the patient forgets his worries, leads a disciplined life and follows a sane diet.

A point to bear in mind is that a prescription for spa treatment must be as accurate as a chemical prescription. The waters should be used as carefully as drugs. Many patients go to the wrong springs, and others are inclined to take over-doses of the drinkable waters. It is clear, however, that the mineral springs of South Africa are a national asset. If the waters of Karlsbad and Baden-Baden and other

European resorts have any value, the South African springs have equal value. Faith must play a large part in many cures. It has been proved that the ice-cold spring at Lourdes, scene of more miraculous cures than all the rest put together, has no special mineral health-giving qualities at all.

On the other hand, heat is an accepted treatment for many disorders. A sceptical doctor remarked long ago that South Africa was a land where it was difficult to secure an ordinary hot bath with its beneficial effects. Thus, he argued, people who went to the springs and had hot baths for the first time in their lives were bound to improve in health. The human body is sensitive to changes of climate, and even a change in drinking water has been known to cause a reaction. Some of the mineral springs are mildly laxative. There is no doubt that the skin is stimulated by regular bathing at these places.

Balneotherapy, as the doctors call the scientific use of mineral springs, has its controversial

aspects. There is much in Nature's chemistry which we still do not understand. It may be that the assimilation of minerals is easier at these springs than out of a bottle made up by a chemist.

CHAPTER 11

VALLEY OF THE WITCH

It is the "valley of the witch", but also possibly the richest valley of its size in the world. If there is one stretch of the Western Province more than another where train passengers put down their books and stare out of the windows entranced, this is it. As a very small boy I remember the excitement of the Hex, and the disappointment on journeys when the train went over that staggering pass after my bed-time.

Here, on a burning summer's day, you may gaze at the mountains and see the last of the winter's snow. Often the snow lies on the Hex River peaks from July to December; and mountaineers will tell you that during some years they have found snow on the heights all the year round.

Snow waters the vines. Snow gives the warm Hex its wealth. Half of all the table grapes that leave our shores for other lands are packed in the Hex River valley. Here, and here alone, you will see ripe grapes of superb quality for more than five months of the year; Almeria grapes, Waltham Cross and Alphonse Lavallee and Barlinka; some of them sweet and ready for cutting in turn from Christmas until the end of May. The snows of the Hex bring four million pounds in cash to the farmers of the valley for grapes alone.

Why the Hex? In a previous book⁷ I related the old folklore story, wondering how much truth might be behind it. Since then I have heard another version with more detail. Nearly two centuries ago the farm Buffelskraal was owned by J. H. Meiring, and the homestead is still there. Meiring's daughter Eliza was so beautiful that young men rode from all the corners of the valley to court her. She could not make up her mind. At last her father grew weary of seeing so

⁷ "In the Land of Afternoon" (Timmins).

many well-groomed saddle-horses at his door, and he told Eliza that she must put this horde of rivals out of their agony.

More as a joke than anything else, Eliza told the young men that she would look with favour on the first to bring her the rare red disa that grew on the Matroosberg precipices. One lovesick man took her at her word. Several days later his body was found at the foot of a cliff. His neck was broken, and in his hand was the faded red flower.

Eliza became demented. She raved day after day, so that people said she was like a witch; a "hex" in Nederlands, "heks" in Afrikaans. Although she was watched, she fell from a height one evening and was killed. Until recent years her initials could be seen, scratched on the windowpane of her room at Buffelskraal. Lichtenstein remarked that the Hex was a "deep, not very broad and obscure valley" which caused the discoverer to give it that name. (Apparently the place seemed weird and suggested witches.) But it cannot be overlooked that a document

bearing the date 1717 refers to the river as the Ekse River. That fact casts doubt on the tragic legend. Perhaps this was just a variation of "hek" and the discoverer regarded the valley as the gateway to the interior.

A really mysterious place-name in this neighbourhood is Matroosberg. I received several letters after a previous attempt to solve this problem, but no one cared to swear to the origin of the name. There is a local legend of a shepherd named Klaas Matroos, but no one could tell me why the memory of this humble old man should have been honoured by calling the highest peak in the Western Province after him.

Hunters and cattle-farmers were the first white men to enter the Hex River valley. The pioneer settler was Roelof Jantz van Hoeting, a cattle farmer whose grazing licence was dated December 21, 1709, valid for six months. Others followed, but there was no great rush to this fabulous valley. Ten years after Van Hoeting's venture there were only four farms, all large

grazing farms, in the Hex - Aan de Hex Rivier over de Rode Zand, Vendutie Kraal, Boven aan de Hexe Rivier aan de Doods, and the Buffelskraal I have already mentioned. The valley area is only about thirty square miles. Early last century there were still just the four cattle farms, and early this century there were six or seven mixed farms. Today you will find two hundred separate farms along the twenty miles of the valley. You will have to pay up to two thousand pounds a morgen for this land, but if you work a good twenty-five morgen farm properly you ought to pay income-tax on eight thousand pounds a year net.

I never pass through the Hex without thinking of the old travellers who used that gateway, and the marvellous narratives they left of a country still almost unknown. There were giants in those days. Thunberg, at one of the Hex farms, met a farmer's wife who, "through good living and indolence", weighed twenty-six stone. Latrobe observed a *huisvrouw* who filled an armchair three feet wide. Her coffin,

kept in readiness according to custom, was the largest Latrobe had ever seen.

Those old travellers also encountered strong men who could pick up three hundred pound bags of maize and place them on the wagons. (Two hundred pounds are enough for most men.) They carried young oxen on their backs and tilted loaded wagons. One old Griqua could snap the thighbone of an eland in two with his hands. He often lifted a large three-legged soup pot from the fire with his little finger and held it while lighting his pipe. Once he put his thumb through a copper kettle, just to show he could do it. But an ever stronger man was "Groot Almans" van Rooyen. A stranger called at his farm one day and asked the way to a neighbouring farm. Van Rooyen picked up a plough, using both hands, and pointed in the right direction.

John Barrow went through the Hex, a somewhat prejudiced author, though Lady Anne Barnard called him "one of the pleasantest, best-informed and most eager-

mindful young men in the world". Barrow made his journey during the first British occupation. He wrote of a land alive with bustard and partridge, snipe and duck and mountain geese, duiker and klipspringer, steenbok, grysbok and ribbok.

Barrow also described the animal called the "yzer varke or iron-hog" which burrowed in the ground. He said the dried and salted porcupine flesh was a great delicacy. Several of the farmers he met were breeding the *ystervark*, but it was so vicious that strangers had to be careful. Four or five hundred baboons sunned themselves on the Hex River rocks as Barrow's wagon drove through the kloof.

My favourite traveller of that period is Petrus Borchardus Borchers. When only fourteen years old he accompanied an expedition sent out by General Dundas under Commissioner P. J. Truter to report on the state of the interior and find out whether cattle could be secured to relieve the meat shortage. (This is

reminiscent of Van Riebeeck's expeditions.) Truter set out with six oxwagons, a number of white farmers, Bastard and Hottentot wagon-drivers and four slaves. He had one hundred and twenty draught oxen. One wagon was loaded with ammunition, tents, medicines and trade goods. The whole cavalcade cost the government fifteen hundred pounds.

Borchers thus came to know the remote parts of the Western Province in the good old days when society had all the charm of a large family circle. He heard the cannon which announced the arrival of the British invaders in False Bay, and watched the Stellenbosch cavalry ride out gaily to repel the attack. When he trekked into the interior the herds and flocks of the farmers were protected by great watchfires and men armed against Bushmen and wild beasts. Truter's wagons trekked with the aid of the sun by day and the stars by night.

So I see the observant young Borchers passing through the Hex River valley, crossing and re-crossing the river, following the faint

and winding track to the north. It was October, yet the mountains were covered with snow almost to their feet.

Borcherds noted that a great deal of brandy was distilled in these districts. It was consumed in the homesteads in little drams called sopies, a word (recalled Borcherds) which went right back to the early days of the colony, when Father van Riebeeck treated the natives. At the end of the Hex River valley lived Wouter de Vos on a beautiful farm where fine, strong horses were bred. Borcherds also admired the oranges.

Then came Lichtenstein, who enjoyed the hospitality of Roelof van der Merwe at the Vendutie Kraal farm. His host had married thrice, while the wife had had two previous husbands. Lichtenstein counted nine children of five different marriages in the house, and noted that these good people had also adopted two orphans.

Through most of last century the Hex River valley remained tranquil and unspoilt. Some of the Karoo travellers chose that route. Artisans went from farm to farm seeking work; the *tuemaker* with his awls and needles and knives, turning out fine sets of harness; the painter who could put fancy scrolls on a Cape cart or wagon; the jobbing builder whose art is still to be seen in the strange ornamentation of stoeps and gables. Then at last came the diamond rush, the gold rush and the railway builders to shatter the peace of the old valley.

Yet it was fruit that really changed the Hex River scene and turned the cattle runs into orchards. This is the birth-place of the Cape fruit export industry. Some give credit to Rhodes and others to Pickstone, great figures in the early days. But the founder was Fred Struben, who formed the Cape Orchard Company, bought land in the Hex River Valley, and brought the experts L. M. Dicey and P. R. Malleson on to the scene to grow the fruit. Struben had the capital as a result of his Rand gold discoveries. He had always

been impressed by the stupendous valley. There is a manuscript in the South African Public Library in which his nephew Charles Struben remarks: "The most significant drop from Kimberley to Cape Town was down off the table land at the head of the Hex River valley. The railway sweeps down from the high ground in a series of great curves which drop thousands of feet. The view is most magnificent in moonlight when Matroosberg and the surrounding mountains are covered with snow half way down from the summit." Charles Struben declared that his uncle selected the Hex because of the rich soil, the water, and the main railway line. That was in 1892, five years before Rhodes started his fruit-growing enterprises.

Dicey had been showing the Egyptians how to grow dates, while Maileson was an Oxford scientist who had received his training in fruit culture, pruning and grafting on Lord Sudeley's farms near Tewkesbury in England. These two men laid out the orchards at the place now called Orchard. Cecil Rhodes stayed there, and this was

the origin of his own interest in fruit-growing. Before he left he had decided to find a man capable of building up a similar enterprise. Malleson suggested H. E. V. Pickstone, an Englishman (not an American as some writers have stated) who had studied fruit in California. Struben's company put up a cold storage plant for fruit at Orchard as far back as 1903; then other farmers in the valley began to understand the possibilities. They turned over to fruit and the grazing disappeared. Rhodes chose the Groot Drakenstein valley for his venture. As Charles Struben has said: "Without detracting from Rhodes's work it is only fair to give the initial credit where it is really due ... What he really did was to be a big enough man to copy somebody else who forestalled him in that particular direction."

Boven aan de Hexe Rivier aan de Doods, one of the early farms, is the site of De Doods village. You find Western Province vegetation on Karoo veld at this spot; and besides the vineyards, grain and sheep are to be seen. It

was at De Dooms that a church was put up to auction not long ago. When the elders fixed the position of the first church in 1908 they thought De Dooms village would grow up round it. Old members of the congregation recall the efforts they made to build the church, everyone helping with building material and carrying it to the site on ox-wagons. A Pastorie was built, too, with a fine garden.

However, the village of De Dooms took shape three-quarters of a mile away from the church. There came a time after World War II when a new church was built in the middle of the village and the old church was used as a hall for Saturday night bioscope shows. Finally a sale of church and Pastorie was advertised. The highest bid was not accepted, but the buildings were sold by private treaty later.

Among the unusual events of the Hex River Valley was the decision of Mr. M. W. van Niekerk of Non Pareil, a wine farmer, to empty all the vats in his cellar into the river. That was a quarter of a century ago, but it has not been

forgotten. Van Niekerk called his seven white foremen and all his labourers together and informed them that there would be no more wine rations, but a payment of three pence a day would be made instead. Then he ordered his men to roll every barrel down to the river and pull out the bungs.

Some were surprised, others were filled with consternation. Nevertheless, the order was obeyed. Van Niekerk turned over to table grapes after that memorable day. Every Sunday morning he held a religious service which his labourers attended. And not a man left him.

Now and again the Hex River valley is filled with smoke. Mountain fires ravage the veld, cross the little streams, and menace homesteads and cottages on the lower slopes. Rings of flames can be seen round the peaks. Hundreds of labourers have to be called out at Christmas time to save the orchards. During the great fire at the end of December 1955 the beaters heard the baboons screaming in fear as they fled before chains of fire. Buck took

refuge in the river. One gang saw a terrified leopard almost trapped by the flames.

Then the rain came, unexpected rain in the midst of a heat wave, a soft rain that fell before dawn and slowly quenched the belt of fire. The people of the richest valley in the world went home thankfully to rest.

CHAPTER 12

HAPPY VALLEY

Turn the pages of the Western Province story and you come again and again to the names of men who built passes over the "mountain range of Africa". This sort of work is admired even in these days of bulldozers and dynamite, with millions of money available. But you have seen that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were men resolute enough to tackle such gigantic tasks with their own money, their own labourers, their own skill. Here is another of them, Jan Mostert, the farmer who cut the first road to the basin where Ceres now stands.

They call it Michell's Pass today. Once it was spelt Mitchell's Pass in an Act of Parliament, and many writers have repeated the error. The pass was named after Colonel Charles Cornwallis Michell, surveyor-general at the Cape during the first half of last century, the man who built Sir Lowry's Pass, the road through Houw Hock, the Montagu Pass and two early Cape lighthouses.

Michell had served under Wellington in the Peninsula War, and had eloped with the fifteen-year-old daughter of a French officer. Their daughter married the traveller Sir James Alexander of South African fame. Michell was not only a great road builder but also a capable artist. His etching on copper of Cradock's Pass (used on the penny Voortrekker postage stamp of 1938) is in the South African Public Library.

I have not been able to find out whether Michell took a hand in the design of Michell's Pass, but he was certainly not the builder. The track was used more than two centuries ago by

farmers bound for the Warm Bokkeveld when the river allowed them to take that route. However, there was a point on the journey where wagons had to be dismantled and carried on the backs of oxen.

Jan Mostert (a descendant of the Mostert who accompanied the explorer Gabbema) made his great effort to improve the track in 1765, and you can still find his cuttings in the kloof. There, too, are scars left on the rocks by the Voortrekker wagons that passed over the Mostert's Hoek road. Mostert's name should have remained, I think, for he paid for the pass out of his own pocket.

Herds of cattle and many flocks of sheep were driven over the old track. Those early farmers crossed the mountain range a little to the north of the present highest point of the road, eighteen hundred feet up, and then toiled down into the basin now known as Ceres. Mostert was almost baffled by the cliffs which shut in the river near the top of the pass, but he overcame the difficulty by

leaving the river and hacking out a new route boldly along the mountain side. He chose this path so well that the present road and railway line follow his route.

Fifteen years after Mostert had completed his work another indomitable spirit named Pienaar built a pass of his own out of the Tulbagh basin, over the Witzenberg to the Cold Bokkeveld. Pienaar had accompanied Colonel Gordon on his journeys. Pienaar was too brave. A band of *drosters* stole his cattle, and Pienaar went unarmed into the mountains to reason with these runaway slaves and recover his property. He was murdered.

Generations of Bokkeveld farmers rode over the Mostert's Hoek road. You can drive from Ceres to Cape Town easily in three hours today; but those farmers were four days on the journey. When they went to the Roodezand church the father rode ahead in his Sunday clothes. Then came his wife and the servants. Often they dismounted, leading the horses and carrying their babies over the dangerous

places. When they travelled by wagon, the ordeal of the Mostert's Hoek track lasted a week. Yet they used it. Soap and butter, products for which the early Warm Bokkeveld farmers were renowned, came over the mountains and reached the Cape Town market at last.

It was in 1846 that Andrew Geddes Bain arrived on the scene. He was still unknown as a road engineer, the Bain's Kloof triumph still lay ahead of him. Mostert's Hoek was officially described as "one of the worst and most dangerous roads in the colony". Bain had hundreds of convicts at his disposal, however, so that he was able to complete the task in two years. The total cost, £22,800, seems ludicrous by modern standards. Ten convicts were set free and others had their sentences reduced for working hard.

Bishop Robert Gray rode up the pass on horseback to visit the convicts during the construction period. He found the prison "admirably conducted" and the discipline

excellent. After addressing the men in the chapel he talked privately to a few English convicts. "I love to see these great works going on in the Colony, opening out as they do vast tracts of land and developing the resources of the country," remarked Bishop Gray. His travel narrative is fascinating but his spellings of place-names were fantastic. He talked of "Musteed's Hock".

When passes are opened it is customary for the orators at the festivities to look into the future with more or less success. One speaker at the Michell's Pass banquet remarked with truth: "Hundreds and thousands of acres in the Warm and Cold Bokkeveld must without this pass have remained as nature left them. All of them will ere long be converted into fields of industry and wealth." Another speaker, less gifted as a prophet, declared: "I do not despair in a few years of seeing our clumsy ox-wagon disappear before the march of civilisation."

Soon after the new pass had been finished the foundation stone of a Dutch Reformed Church

was laid at Ceres. Mr. C. Piers, magistrate of Tulbagh, spoke at the ceremony. "It was here that you halted and prepared for the labour and even danger of transporting your goods through that rugged mountain," he recalled. "There were few who ever started without fear. And many a one has offered up heartfelt thanks on his safe return."

Farmers who had faced such hardships did not grudge the Michell's Pass tolls. The tariff was three pence a wheel, two pence for every trek-ox, and a half-penny for each sheep, goat or pig.

Michell's Pass, as Bain built it, was too narrow in places for two cars to pass. It was widened soon after World War II, and some of the grades were improved. That work cost £13,000 a mile for the run of five and a half miles over the mountains between Wolseley and Ceres. As a taxpayer I long for Bain's convicts, and I would set all the good workers free in the end if they saved me some of the

money paid to the native labourers of our own day.

Next time you drive through Michell's Pass, look out for a white "tombstone" (on your right, northbound) bearing a name and date. It was placed there in memory of a Paarl man who left home in his car one day and vanished. Months later there was a bush fire in Michell's Pass, and the beaters came upon a rusty car and a skeleton in thick bush far below the road. The mystery was solved. Another tragedy in that neighbourhood happened long ago but has never been forgotten. Once there was an inland sea covering the Warm Bokkeveld, and at last the water found an outlet through the mountains near the summit of Michell's Pass. The gorge in the soft sandstone is deep but in places it is only a few feet wide. You can jump across, stand on the far side, hold out your hand and help a girl across. This is not my idea of sport, but it was the custom among the young people at picnics in the early days of Ceres village.

Senator G. G. Munnik was a boy of thirteen when once such a party was held about a century ago. He watched a young man, who was engaged to a very pretty girl, putting out his hand several times and drawing it back. This stupid joke annoyed the girl. She jumped, fell into the gorge and was never seen again. Young Munnik suffered from shock, developed a nervous twitch, and had to be sent on a long journey by cart. Years passed before his nerves recovered completely.

One day I stood in the shadow of the giant bluegum tree on the farm Friederichsruhe at Ceres and thought of the way these Australian trees have grown into Western Province life. I do not like foreign invaders that smother the local flora. Nevertheless, I must admit that the gums have given us many tons of clear golden honey. Farmers starting work on shade less land have shelter and firewood within a few years; the blue and aromatic smoke rises from many chimneys. And the same tree provides fencing, disselbooms and roofing timber. Boil

the green leaves in water and you have the old farm remedy for certain fevers. It is a tree that survives fires and frosts.

Forestry experts have estimated the age of the Friederichsruhe bluegum at about eighty years. Its girth at breast height is more than twenty-eight feet, and the topmost branches are over one hundred and thirty feet from the ground. This tree must be without a rival in its species in South Africa.

Ceres, as a village, is not much older than that bluegum tree. Though the thatched houses look mellow under the oaks, there is not one in the village which has reached the century mark. Close settlement in the Warm Bokkeveld is comparatively recent. Lichtenstein, the German botanist and author whose travels always grip me, found only eleven farms in the rich basin of the Warm Bokkeveld early last century. He realised, however, that this was one of the most fertile parts of the colony. Among them were the loan farms Bokfontein and Wagenboom's

Rivier, given out in 1728, and Rietvallei; and Leeuwenfontein in the Cold Bokkeveld was given out soon afterwards. Each farm boundary was supposed to be half an hour's walk at that time; and the farmer paid only a few pounds a year to the government for thousands of morgen.

Veldkornet Frans van der Merwe, who was among Lichtenstein's hosts in the Warm Bokkeveld, was the owner of a tame quagga which he hoped to use for stud purpose to improve the local horses. Lichtenstein noted the strength and active habits of the Bokkevelders, and put it down to the healthy climate. He thought they were more refined, too, than the farmers he had met farther north.

Wilhelm von Meyer, another German traveller, passed through the Warm and Cold Bokkeveld in 1840 and left some interesting impressions. He stayed with a Van der Merwe at Verkeerdevlei, a noteworthy fresh water lake to the east of Hottentot's Kloof. In winter, when the vlei filled up, the vlei water pushed

back into the river that flowed into it. That made the river appear to be running in the wrong direction; hence the name. Von Meyer remarked on the fine white fish in the vlei, the wild duck and geese, flamingo and pelicans. Farm labourers, he found, were willing to work for seven shillings and sixpence a month. Verkeerdevlei was a farm of seven thousand morgen. Van der Merwe had bought this place, and six thousand morgen of winter grazing in the karoo, for eleven hundred pounds. He had four thousand sheep and goats.

It was the opening of Michell's Pass at the end of 1848 that led to the founding of Ceres the following year. Eighteen hundred acres of unappropriated Crown lands were set aside for the village, but there was no real development for five or six years, when Mr. Jan F. Munnik came along. (He was the father of the boy I have mentioned, who became Senator Munnik.) Jan Munnik was in search of a mild climate for his asthma; the first of a long line of chest sufferers to find relief at Ceres. He

bought the farm Rietvallei where Ceres now stands for twelve hundred pounds. He had the farm surveyed in seven lots, and presented an erf to Bishop Robert Gray for the English Church. Another section, known as the "Glebe Lands", went to the coloured community.

Munnik found good building stone at Ceres, and engaged two Scottish masons, Sandy Bain and Abe Taylor, whose fine craftsmanship may still be seen in the village. Munnik also designed a water furrow, and led it across the river by means of an aqueduct. Ten years after the energetic Munnik's arrival, Ceres became a municipality. Munnik had made a profit of nearly forty thousand pounds as a result of his shrewd speculation in land.

Among the visitors in those early days was an intelligent Hollander who was to make a name for himself in the Free State, young H. A. L. Hamelberg, who kept a diary. He found only the church and a few houses in Ceres, but it was *nagmaal* time and the new village was crowded. Munnik entertained him to dinner and found him

a room, with three others, at a boarding house. There was a saloon bar serving punch and gin, and the drinkers were being amused by a man with a barrel-organ and dancing dolls. Munnik showed Hamelberg a house which he had just built at a cost of four hundred and twenty pounds. It had eight rooms and two workshops, and Munnik expected to let it for seventy-two pounds a year.

Hamelberg had brought some soda water from Cape Town with him. He met a farmer who had never seen soda before, and poured him out a glass. The farmer tried it cautiously, then threw it away with the remark: "That wild water tastes too earthy."

Ceres had a part-time postmaster in the middle of last century. Mr. Kensington Edwards applied for the job, and suggested a salary of twelve pounds a year. He accepted half.

Pioneers of Ceres tried to organize horse racing, but the first meeting was not successful, "several horses being withdrawn on account of clerical

interference". A Mutual Improvement Society, which started a public library, was more fortunate. It was reported that "the movement has done much to abate local factions and animosities".

Then came the rush to the diamond fields in the 'seventies. The tranquil Ceres basin had not seen so many travellers since the Voortrekkers passed that way. Now the Warm Bokkeveld saw not only dozens of ox-wagons every day, but Cape carts and mail coaches as well. This was the shortest route to the north. Gibson's Red Star coaches and other adventurous teams thundered over the pass along the trail to wealth. Enterprising people in Ceres formed a transport company of their own, carrying passengers from Cape Town to the diamond fields at twelve pounds a head "in wagons which are built with a view to comfort and ventilation when required".

The toll-gate on Michell's Pass was rented out at fifteen hundred pounds a year, and the lessee made a handsome profit. Down

in the village the fortune seekers drank and rioted - and were pelted with quinces by the local boys. Barney Barnato, penniless, appeared as a conjurer in the village inn to raise the price of a meal.

Anthony Trollope, the English novelist, passed through Ceres after the rush and called it "a Rasselas happy valley, a smiling spot, green and sweet among the mountains". But he added: "I was told that Ceres had lately been smitten with too great a love for speculation, had traded beyond her means and lost much of her capital. That reaction had probably produced the peculiarly sleepy appearance which I observed."

Ceres became a health resort towards the end of last century. Ninety years ago a Dr. Fuller wrote a pamphlet praising the dry atmosphere. Twelve years later Dr. Henry Leach, medical officer of the Port of London, visited Ceres - and discovered that tuberculosis was almost unknown on the Warm Bokkeveld. The district surgeon at that time was Dr. Gustav

Zahn, and he took in patients from England and Switzerland. One of Zahn's patients was a Swiss who had been finding the winters at Basle too severe. This man gained thirteen pounds in weight during six months at Ceres. As the fame of the place spread a company was formed and two sanatoria were built. Patients were assured that they could sleep with their windows wide open, "which has been so much recommended of late".

This healthy reputation, combined with the winter snow, gave Ceres the title of the "Switzerland of South Africa". Snow falls in Ceres during some bitter winter nights, the town is surrounded by white mountains, white grain lands, white bushes. When a heavy week-end snowfall is reported, hundreds of Cape Town motorists drive to Ceres and find themselves travelling bumper to bumper. Perhaps it is worth it. You may see snow a foot deep on the thatch of the higher farmhouses. But beware of slippery ice on the roads.

Some motorists like to fill their cars with snow and take it back home to build snowmen. Paarl enjoyed the sight of a snowman in front of the town hall in 1914. During the heavy fall of June 1956 a Paarl motorist drove to Ceres and returned with enough snow to repeat the feat.

Like many other villages, Ceres has had its dreams of sudden riches. Lichtenstein found traces of gold in the Warm Bokkeveld; and so did Thomas Bain, the geologist, seventy years later. Rumours of gold were revived in the district not long ago.

It was in 1895 that a poplar plantation near Ceres was destroyed by fire, and the cause was said to be "spontaneous ignition of natural gas from boreholes". A company was formed to prospect for petroleum. Among those who launched the enterprise was that great swindler Horatio Bottomley. Ceres did not strike oil.

An ox-wagon and a Cape cart entered Ceres soon after World War I, and a wealthy Englishman

stepped out and stood enchanted by the scene. His name was Maidment, and his wife was with him. Maidment loved mountains, and sometimes when he saw a stretch of mountain land that appealed to him he found the owner and bought the area. His wife suffered from indigestion and insomnia. During the treks in the Western Province, however, Mrs. Maidment walked up the mountain passes and found that her ailments no longer troubled her. At night she could eat grilled meat and then sleep heavily. All she had needed was fresh air and exercise.

Maidment bought thousands of morgen of mountain land in the Ceres district and then returned to England. He never made any use of his investment, and Maidment Estates Ltd. were sold by auction shortly after World War II. Maidment is remembered in Ceres mainly because of the four plump English horses that drew his Cape cart. They were the only horses with gold-filled teeth ever seen in that village!

Early farmers in the Warm and Cold Bokkeveld were sheep and cattle owners, as I have pointed

out, and the fruit industry was not established until the early years of this century. I believe Mr. D. J. Joubert of Morceaux was the pioneer. Mr. Joe Sarembock, a farsighted market agent, also saw the possibilities, acquired a farm and planted apples and pears on a large scale. Within half a century Ceres had more acres under fruit trees than any other district in the Union, and two-thirds of the Ceres district's income was derived from fruit. Here the peach rules the orchards (seven hundred thousand trees) with apples and pears running neck and neck for second place.

It cost eleven thousand pounds a mile to build a branch railway through the mountains to Ceres. This line was opened in 1912 and gave a great impetus to the fruit industry. When I first travelled on the main railway line as a small boy, noting every detail of the journey with more interest than I am able to show today, there was a station called Ceres Road. This became Wolseley when the link with Ceres was completed. Wolseley village received its name in honour of Sir Garnet Wolseley, who

fought the Zulus. A company was formed to lay out the village on the farm Goedgevonden, and some of the directors - Messrs. Molteno, Van der Byl, Stamper and Ludwig Wiener - were friendly with Sir Garnet and wished his name to be remembered. Old maps show a Sir Garnet Square in Wolseley, and streets named after the directors of the company. Wolseley is now a municipality, with factories where the apricots of the district are preserved.

Wolseley's main claim to fame lies in the fact that it saw the birth of the wool washing industry at the Cape. It was there in the 'seventies of last century that Mr. W. W. Dickson risked fifteen thousand pounds on a factory in which he also planned to make blankets and other woollen goods. The blankets came later. When the railway through the karoo was opened, the enterprising Dickson made blocks of ice and supplied the trains.

Ceres soil is so rich that some of the gardens in the town are worth four hundred pounds a year

in fruit. A large apple farm may yield fifty thousand pounds gross in an ordinary year. When the pears are packed in February a coloured woman may earn as much as seven pounds if she works at high pressure during a five-day week. Half the export pear crop is grown in the Warm Bokkeveld, along the foot of the mountain range to the west of the town.

What is the secret of success in Ceres? Not only the soil, but the absence of the south-easter, the dreaded wind that blows so much fruit off the trees elsewhere. Thus you will find a number of enterprising immigrants farming at Ceres, besides the old Afrikaner families. I have pleasant memories of an English farmer who entertained me to dinner on a model farm on the heights of the island of St. Helena a few years ago. Next time I heard of him he had settled at Ceres with his family. And I was told of a Swede without any previous experience of farming who had built up a profitable dairy herd.

Ceres has been praised lavishly for its beauty, and when you gaze at the mountains and the trees it is hard to disagree with those who call it the loveliest village in the Cape. Architects, however, declare that Ceres grew up during an ugly period of house design; the era when thatch gave way to corrugated iron and covered stoeps. Town Square is not without fine old homes; and there is charm in many of the new houses. But town planners say that the streets are unnecessarily wide. They dislike the "gridiron pattern" and assert that Ceres depends on its oaks to relieve the dreariness.

Visionaries with vast irrigation schemes in mind would like to see Ceres and the whole Warm Bokkeveld submerged in the waters of a gigantic dam. This basin in the mountains would certainly trap a high rainfall; and the narrow outlet could easily be blocked. Yet somehow I do not believe that Ceres will vanish in our time.

Six miles from Ceres is the Gydo Pass, leading to the Cold Bokkeveld, a name given in the days when springbok were found there in great numbers. They were exterminated years ago. Gydo is a Hottentot name, and I believe it refers to a species of euphorbia which grows near the pass.

Take note of the *waboom* when you drive over this pass, for it has not all vanished. It is a bush rather than a tree. I have already referred to the use wagon-builders made of it; it was also the finest wood for brake-blocks. They made ink from *waboom* leaves in the old days. I am told that the bark yields a dye which is used for staining furniture. The wood has a beautiful grain, and a floor of *waboom* blocks is a grand sight, though too expensive for most people. Pipes and paper-knives are made from the golden-brown wood. A pity so much of it has gone up in smoke, though I must admit that a *braaivleis* where the *waboom* is used gives the finest of all grilled chops.

Do you remember the glimpse I gave you of De Hoop, ancestral home of the huge Van der Merwe family near Paarl? Schalk van der Merwe married Anna Prevot, the Huguenot, and one of their seventeen children was a Cold Bokkeveld pioneer. For a long period the Van der Merwes and their descendants formed the leading family in this district.

Lichtenstein encountered a sinister character named Scholz who lived in a lonely house in the Cold Bokkeveld. He was the overseer of the road into the Cold Bokkeveld; he collected the tolls and looked after road repairs. Scholz was so fat that he had to travel in a special little wagon drawn by his slaves. He told Lichtenstein that he had once been lean. Farmers in the district complained about Scholz, and it was rumoured that the fat man had secret caves in a labyrinth of rocks where he kept flocks of stolen sheep. Scholz had many chances of robbing the men who were driving sheep to the Cape Town market.

About a year later Scholz's slaves gave him away, and Scholz was thrown into prison. Lichtenstein visited him there and commented: "In his gigantic form, his one-eyed face, his craft and deceit, his disposition to solitude, and in having abjured vegetable food, it would perhaps have been difficult to find a stronger resemblance to the monster Polypheme than in the owner of these caverns." Scholz died in prison.

Even now the Cold Bokkeveld is as remote and unknown to many city-dwellers as it was in Lichtenstein's day. This area of nine hundred square miles is made up of basins shut in by mountains, lonely kloofs; vlaktes and valleys; and in recent years it has become the most interesting example of farming development in South Africa.

Cold Bokkeveld farmers were growing peaches for drying a quarter of a century ago. That was their mainstay, for they could not reach the markets easily with fresh fruit. On their lovely farms among the mountains they were among the last to maintain the old Cape feudal system. To this day you will find coloured labourers

descended from the slaves who worked on the same farms; labourers who prefer farm life to factories.

Better roads and railway buses opened up this forgotten world of the Cold Bokkeveld. Expert investors discovered that in these far corners the soil and climate and water were all reliable. Some of the old families were tempted, and moved out. And so it has come about that when you drive from the Gydo Pass northwards for sixty miles to the pass leading into Citrusdal you pass through the most valuable land in the country.

Several farms in these areas have fetched one hundred thousand pounds each. I believe the record price was paid in March 1955, when a company bought Mr. K. P. Malherbe's farm Esperanto (about seven hundred morgen) for one hundred and thirty thousand pounds. I heard of a farm, sold after World War II for twelve thousand pounds, which shot up to one hundred and ten thousand at a recent sale. One farm, worked by Mr. Retief and his sons, is probably the largest fruit farm in the Southern Hemisphere; it has

a quarter of a million trees. So it is not surprising to learn that the wealthiest Cold Bokkeveld farmers have incomes between fifty thousand and one hundred thousand pounds a year.

It is strange that the boom in the Cold Bokkeveld came so late, for as far back as Von Meyer's day this area had the reputation of producing some of the world's finest wheat. The land gave a return of sixty fold. These farms were also famous for horses. They supplied English cavalry regiments and sent remounts to India at the time of the Mutiny.

You may still discover links with the old, secluded Cold Bokkeveld, romantic survivals, customs and traditions, and also signs of tragedy. Deep in the mountains off the main road is the farm Houdenbek, formerly Houd den Bek, meaning "Keep Quiet". The name baffles me, but there is no mystery about the murders committed on that farm long ago. They will show you the marks of the bullets

on the solid front door and shutters of the old homestead.

Willem van der Merwe, a man of thirty-five, was the owner of Houdenbek in 1825, and with him on the night of February 1 were his wife Elsie, their son of thirteen and daughter of ten; a teacher named Verlee and his wife, who had just arrived to educate the children; and Johannes van Rensburg, a neighbour.

This was the period of unrest when the slaves were talking of their liberation while their masters were uneasy about the future. Willem van der Merwe was kind to his slaves. He had recently invited a missionary, the Rev. M. V. Vos of Tulbagh, to hold a service for the coloured people on the farm. Van der Merwe had grown up with one of his slaves named Galant, and Galant was his favourite. But on the subject of liberation, Willem van der Merwe was a fanatic. He declared that he would rather shoot all his slaves dead than set them free, and if any Englishmen or officials came to Houdenbek to free the slaves he

would shoot them too. Some of Willem's neighbours sympathised with this view.

Such was the dangerous atmosphere at the time of the tragedy. It was not improved by the restless state of mind of slaves like Galant. Some slaves appear to have regarded the coming liberation as a new era of licence. Galant accompanied his master on visits to other Cold Bokkeveld farms and seized this chance of plotting with other slaves. All the white people were to be murdered and the farms looted. Galant saw himself at the head of a slave army marching on Cape Town; but he told his followers that if the white commandos were too strong they would take refuge beyond the law to the north of the Orange River. Second-in-command of this treacherous plot was Abel, a slave owned by Willem van der Merwe's brother and neighbour Barend, who farmed at Rosendal on the Riet River.

Treachery of the murderous sort should be easy to carry out at the start, when the victims

are taken by surprise. Galant, however, was no general. He led the first attack on Barend van der Merwe's homestead, but failed in his purpose. Barend's wife was away. His children were hidden in a cave by a faithful maid named Mietjie, who resisted all threats. Barend meanwhile escaped, reached the farm Lange Rivier and raised the alarm.

Galant then took his band from Rosendal on stolen horses to Houdenbek. The homestead was locked and shuttered, but Galant knew that his master would come out at daybreak and go to the cattle kraal. So the murderers waited among the peach trees.

Willem van der Merwe appeared at last, accompanied by Van Rensburg. While the farmers were in the kraal, Galant and Abel slipped into the house in search of firearms. People kept their guns loaded in those days, and there were two *voorlaaiers* in the bedroom. Mrs. van der Merwe sensed trouble when the two slaves entered the room, and held the guns. There was a struggle. One gun

went off, wounding Mrs. van der Merwe in the leg. But now the slaves were armed. They rushed outside and Galant fired at Willem van der Merwe, grazing his shoulder. Van Rensburg jumped on to a horse with the idea of riding for help, but he was headed off and could only return to the homestead. He rode in at the back door without dismounting. Willem reached the front door safely and barricaded it. Then the siege of Houdenbek began. Galant was in favour of setting the thatch on fire, but his followers said the women and children should be spared.

When full daylight came, Willem opened the front door a little and called to Galant through the crack. He tried to reason with the slaves, and reminded them that murder would be punished. Galant took up a position where he could fire through the crack. Next time Willem opened the door Galant was ready; the bullet passed through Willem's head, killing him instantly. Van Rensburg managed to lock the front door again, but the slaves forced

their way in at the back. Van Rensburg and Verlee were then captured and shot dead in cold blood. The two wives were spared. The two children remained hidden in the oven throughout this ghastly episode.

After drinking some wine the slaves rode away to Johannes Dalree's farm Sandrivier. Fortunately he was away. And now an avenging commando was on the track of the murderers, with Veldkornet W. F. du Toit in charge. Within a few days all the slaves with the exception of Galant had been arrested. Galant was found some days later, hiding in the Skurfteberg.

Galant, Abel and eleven others came up for trial at Worcester on March 1 that year, and the verdict was given a week later. Galant, Abel and one other slave were sentenced to death. Two slaves were acquitted. The rest were sentenced to floggings and various terms in prison. After the execution by hanging at Worcester the heads of Galant and Abel were cut off and taken to the place in the Cold

Bokkeveld where the roads from the farms Scotland and Friesland meet. There the heads were placed on poles as a warning to the slaves of the district. Thirty years later a German traveller named Von Meyer noted that the two skulls were still in position. They have gone now, but the place called Koppieshoogte is on the map, in memory of the Houdenbek murders.

Houdenbek is a flourishing farm today. Near the homestead the Molen River has been dammed, so that a large vlei with reedy islets has appeared. Wading birds may be seen on the mudflats and herons among the groves of poplars. Waterfowl and weaverbirds breed there. On the mountain slopes are fancolins, partridges and a few ribbok. Some years ago the owner, Mr. E. H. Bazeley, turned the old scene of tragedy into a game sanctuary.

Below the Gydo Pass is a settlement with its own story. Not long after Munnik bought up Ceres, a shrewd though uneducated farmer

named Jan Goosen paid £6000 for a large farm, cut it up into ninety erven, and called the place Prince Alfred's Hamlet after Queen Victoria's eldest son, then visiting the Cape.

Everyone said the price was fantastic. This was rich alluvial soil, however, and when Goosen had sold the erven he had recovered his £6000 and remained in possession of the original homestead and its lands. Settlers found that one erf yielded at least a leaguer of dop brandy. This, with grazing and sowing land, gave each family a living. Prince Alfred's Hamlet flourished, and still flourishes in its vineyards and orchards of pears, apples and peaches.

By now you will have realised that although the Western Province is one of the closely settled areas of South Africa, it has remote heights and distant corners where you can listen to the silence. But there was a roaring in my ears when I saw the loneliest farm in the Cape, for I was flying over the mountains in a small, open aircraft. I had a map in the front

cockpit. Tulbagh and the Witzenberg peaks were clear enough, and I could make out the head waters of the Olifants River. Away on the right was the Cold Bokkeveld; on the left the Porterville range. And as Great Winterhoek dropped astern I saw a farm in the mountains, so far from anywhere that I began wondering and imagining the life of those people who seemed to have oaks and orchards in the clouds.

I pin-pointed that farm on the map. If I had been a mountaineer, which I am not, I would have made for the place on foot. As it was, years passed before one of the most determined climbers I know told me the story of the loneliest farm.

Denis Woods was the climber. He and his companions started their trek at a point twelve miles north of the Gydo Pass summit, having planned to cross the mountains and descend into Porterville. They traversed the wild Skurfteberg range into the Olifants River valley. Fresh leopard spoor along a sandy

stream bed suggested that they were in untamed country. Some miles farther on they encountered a coloured man, who showed them an old footpath.

They followed the route and crossed a deep, swift stream by means of an ingenious pole and plank bridge. That night they camped beside Visgat pool on the remote farm called Drostersgat; a farm, no doubt with a story of old robbers and runaways who made their lair in the mountains.

Two days later Denis and his party looked over the top of the Witzenberg range into an isolated basin on the far side. And there, to their astonishment, they observed a farm fifteen hundred feet below them, in a position where they had never expected to find any sign of civilisation larger than a surveyor's beacon. The farm stood in desolate surroundings, thanks to successive generations of farmers who had grazed too many cattle there and cut down too many trees. It was twelve miles from the nearest wagon-track, thirty miles from

Porterville, thirty miles from Ceres. No car or cart or wagon had ever reached that Shangri-La in the mountains. Every load of farm produce had to come out on pack-donkeys.

Denis found the farm more attractive at close quarters. It was at a height of three thousand five hundred feet. The farmer was a coloured patriarch named Bynes von Nuffel, son of a German settler. Von Nuffel and his family lived in a thatched house and cottage over a century old. It reminded Denis of the style of Tinus de Jongh, with an old stone cattle kraal, a barn, and a line of oaks. The name of the place was Perdevlei, originally Paarden Vallei, after the mountain zebras that roamed there until fairly late last century.

Von Nuffel supported his large family by keeping cattle and sheep, cultivating rye and tending the orchards that I had noticed from the air. It was September, and the sheep had to have karoo grazing at that season. Denis examined the steep pass leading out of the farm and marvelled at the idea of urging cattle and sheep over that formidable path. (Later he met a police sergeant

who had visited Perdevlei on horseback, and the sergeant declared that he would never attempt that feat again.) It was much easier to imagine - leopards attacking the cattle, a common experience according to Von Nuffel.

Denis said that the man who had built up that farm, one of the highest in the Western Province, and probably the most remote, was a pioneer indeed. It was a solid little place. A violent black south-easter swept over Perdevlei that night, the most severe mountain storm Denis had seen. The visitors were glad to take shelter in Von Nuffel's stable. They climbed several peaks with Perdevlei as their base, and formed lasting impressions of the lonely farm. Neighbours had come and gone during Perdevlei's century. Three miles down the valley they found a long-abandoned ruin called Klein Kliphuis, once a flourishing farm. Only the Von Nuffels, father and son, had been able to stand the extreme isolation year after year.

Drive out of Ceres by the north-east road and you are on the loneliest road in the Cape. I can swear

to that, for once I broke down there, and waited for hours and then walked fourteen miles for help with never a car in sight all the time. You come to the end of the Western Province twenty miles from Ceres, and the place is called Karoo Poort.

Karoo Poort impressed itself on me as it did on all the old travellers. It is a dramatic place, with contrasts so sharp that the scene is etched for ever in a special frame of memory. When I first saw it I had come out of the karoo after driving all night from Verneuk Pan. The driver, a racing motorist, stopped at the Uitkomst homestead for breakfast. For several days my work had meant speed; more speed than I liked; too much flying, too much fast motoring, too much writing with one eye on the clock. Now here was the peace of the centuries, a place of refreshment where I could forget the newspapers and savour my coffee and watch the ghostly cavalcade of travellers passing through the Poort.

Once again Lichtenstein gives you the feel of the place. "I have seldom seen a spot more silent and sequestered without being confined and gloomy," he wrote. "It was the place of all others for one who was altogether weary of the world and of living among mankind to return to."

Bruyere was the farmer occupying Uitkomst in Lichtenstein's day, and there was a fine orchard and wheat field. "As if by enchantment we found ourselves in the mild twilight of this contracted valley, the living vegetation of which formed so fine a contrast with the dry, barren and almost boundless plain," wrote Lichtenstein.

Karoo Poort is a three hours' run from Cape Town now, but it has never lost its tranquil atmosphere. No train whistles disturb you there, and not many car hooters. For a mile the Doorn River stream runs with the road, keeping the old fig trees alive, watering the poplars and oaks of Uitkomst farm. Uitkomst, a government farm, was leased two centuries

ago on condition that the farmer provided food and shelter for travellers on payment. I believe this clause still holds good, as it did years ago when I ate my grilled chop, fried egg and farm bread after the long night drive.

All the botanists who pass this way notice the sudden transition from a land of ericas and proteas and renosterbos to the karoo landscape of aloes with speckled leaves, tiny plants that show their pink flowers in autumn, vygies and the green euphorbia which has yellow flowers in winter. The great Burchell, who came six years after Lichtenstein, collected thirty new plants in the Karoo Poort area. He called it "the very door of the desert", and gazed upon a handsome erica which had accompanied him to the last moment "to take a long farewell in the name of the whole family".

Burchell sketched the karee trees in the poort, and Dr. A. Hall identified these trees, probably the same specimens, fairly recently. Dr. Hall also noted the rare *Lithops Comptonii*, rarely seen in its natural surroundings. And beyond

the poort he found a low, fleshy vygie with the deepest crimson flowers he had ever seen, a gem among succulents.

The track through Karoo Poort was one of South Africa's oldest roads. It led to the hunting grounds of the little-known Orange River; and for many years it was a road for adventurers only. Men bound for the diamond fields last century dreaded the trek beyond Karoo Poort. As recently as 1871 a newspaper report declared that the Poort "was regarded as a huge ogre which devoured both man and beast". The bones that lay bleaching under the karoo sun deterred nervous travellers, and many a wagon-load of goods was sent the long way round through Port Elizabeth.

Karoo Poort was an outpost of civilisation for those who came south from the diamond fields in open mule-drawn wagons in the early days. For eight or nine days they had jolted over the sluits, drenched by thunder showers or burned by the sun. Then at last the grim karoo was behind them, and the Western Province

mountains lay ahead. Here the spans of mules were replaced by horses to take the wagons through Hottentot's Kloof to Ceres.

Hottentot's Kloof was regarded as the most dangerous of the mountain passes on the route at that time. Bain's Kloof and Michell's Pass had boulders on their edges. Hottentot's Kloof was a sheer drop, and the drivers always pointed out the shattered remains of post-carts and wagons and the skeletons of the teams far below.

CHAPTER 13

SOME FARMS HAVE SURVIVED

No longer do the Western Province farmers return to the Cape Peninsula once a year in a body as they did when the agricultural shows were held under the Rosebank oaks. I liked to see them coming back to the peninsula where all our farming started. That old showground had atmosphere, and I resented the move to Goodwood.

At Rosebank I met farmers who had attended every show since 1894, the year when the site was first used for the purpose. Once it was Zorgvliet vineyard, one of the first to be planted, and owned for many years by the Mostert family. Koornhoop and Groote Schuur close by were also wine farms. In the 'eighties of last century the vines died. Mr. L. A. Peringuey, then French master at the Diocesan College, had read about this pest and identified it as the dreaded phylloxera. Mostert was ruined and sold his farm to Cecil Rhodes; and Rhodes handed over the old vineyard to the Western Province Agricultural Society for its annual shows.

Governor Sir Henry Loch opened the first show, with the band of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment and pipers of the Black Watch sweating in their heavy Victorian uniforms in the March heat. "Tickey beer and champagne were available for followers of Bacchus," wrote a reporter. Pride of the farm machinery section was a pump worked by a

horse. This pump, it was claimed, was capable of bringing up three thousand gallons of water an hour from fifty feet. Among the South African industrial exhibits were Cape blankets, tins of crawfish, matches, tobacco, snuff, cigars and jams. Two thousand people were there on the first day.

I saw my first Rosebank Show in 1904 at the age of four. As a schoolboy I never missed a show if I could help it, for generous manufacturers handed out free samples of breakfast foods and toothpastes, cigarettes and tobacco, little bottles of fruit juice, soap and medical remedies, boot polish, tea and coffee. Children are not showered with such presents nowadays.

Cities have a cruel way of smothering fine old farms, and it is interesting to discover the pockets of land which have survived. Cape Town preserves its earliest farm in the shape of the botanic gardens. In many a backyard in the suburbs you will find vines or fruit trees, solitary

relics of lost vineyards and orchards. And some farms have survived.

Above Tokai rises the mountain called Steenberg, and at the foot is Steenberg farm, once known as Zwaanswyk. I believe this farm has the earliest title deeds granted in the Cape, for it was in 1682 that Simon van der Stel signed them. The widow Catherina Ras was the first owner. Once the lovely little homestead was an outspan on the old road from the Castle to Simon's Bay.

Steenberg has another claim to fame. It has been in the possession of one family, the Louws, for two and a half centuries. Mr. Nicholas Louw, the present owner, found the signature of Marie Louw and the date 1711 on a bedroom wall when he scraped off layers of paper some time ago. Although the original farm was split up among brothers centuries ago, Mr. Louw has four hundred morgen of land, some of it mountainous, but with three hundred acres under white hanepoot for the table, Riesling and Steen for wine.

It is satisfying to discover such a grand example of the classic Cape Dutch architecture as Steenberg homestead, with all its yellowwood and stinkwood, its ironwood floors, its teak windows and panelled furniture with old Cape silver decorations. All these treasures have come down through the years without damage by fire, and unchanged by the hand of man. A sundial in the garden bears the date 1756, and this is said to have been used at the Castle. It gave the time with such accuracy that Cape Town's clocks were set by it. Another relic is a slave bell which may have called the labourers of Catherina Ras to work. How remote the gabled homestead must have been in Catherina's day. Nowadays the bell is rung only at New Year.

Hout Bay is a suburb which has managed to retain its character as a farming area. Vegetable growers flourish, and there are dairy farms in the valley. It was as far back as 1681 that Willem van Dieden and Pieter van der Westhuizen were granted the land now known as Kronendal, so that Hout Bay has a long and unbroken farming tradition. In fact,

Hout Bay was producing meat and milk long before the white man came. Van Riebeeck's sailors found Hottentot kraals along the beach, and there were about five hundred people with their herds of Afrikander cattle.

Before the seventeenth century ended a wagon track was built over Constantia Nek so that timber from the great melkbos and wild olive and yellowwood trees could be transported to the Table Bay settlement. Elephants still roamed the forests, and one or two were shot.

Kronendal is Hout Bay's oldest surviving homestead, built in 1800 by J. G. van Helsing. The date is confirmed in the diary of William Duckitt, the English agricultural expert who toured the Cape giving advice to farmers. Duckitt wrote of his Hout Bay visit: "I saw only one place, which belonged to Mr. van Helsing near the bay. He was building a large house near which he has an overshot water mill for grinding corn. The soil about him is very poor and sandy and his crops were

slight, but he had some pretty young stock on his premises of black and white colour."

Van Helsing found all the timber he needed for Kronendal among the driftwood on the beach. Nowadays the grand H-shaped building is a youth hostel; the handsome facade has been restored; the young people have oiled the old teak window-frames and fanlights. One landmark at least has been saved.

Valley Grange, another beautiful Hout Bay homestead, stands on the farm known as Moddergat. The farm was granted to Colonel Christopher Bird in 1821; but the gabled house and wine cellar were built by later owners, the Boonzaaiers, about twenty years afterwards. The walls are from eighteen to thirty inches thick. In the vast kitchen, which appears to have remained untouched, you see the open rafters and thatch, the huge fireplace with quaint Dutch oven in one side. A massive chimney shaft soars up into the rafters. Small, paned windows look out into a square, cobbled yard.

Among the old settled families of Hout Bay are the Trautmanns. First of the line was Jacob Trautmann, who arrived from Germany about a century ago. After helping to construct the Paarl-Wellington railway, Trautmann bought fifty morgen of excellent land at Hout Bay for sixty-two pounds. He built a boarding house on the site of the present Hout Bay Hotel and planted the oaks which are admired by every visitor. Workmen were scarce at that period. Trautmann did most of the work himself, assisted only by a strong Hottentot woman. Jacob Trautmann was a powerful man. Once he was involved in a dispute about a vineyard, and spent a whole night tearing up hundreds of vines by the roots. Jacob started the fishing industry at Hout Bay.

His eldest son, also Jacob, born in 1870, was still a vigorous patriarch, digging his own soil in Bobbejaanskloof, when I looked in not long ago. He remembered Hout Bay when it was wild and wooded. "You could have walked about naked without anyone seeing you,"

Jacob remarked. This old Trautmann took part in the Barberton gold rush, made seven thousand pounds, lost the lot, and went back to building, fishing and farming at Hout Bay.

Once I came across an old newspaper with a note on life at Hout Bay in 1911 which is worth quoting. "This is the world of the Schwenkes and Trautmanns," declared the writer. "The wagons of these allied clans go rumbling into the early morning market with the seasonable fruits of the land, while their fishing boats reap the harvests of the sea. Recently a Hout Bay farmer came into Cape Town with French gold to spend. A man-o'-war had put into the bay for food and water, and he had sold the captain some fresh vegetables. At the Hout Bay shop you can buy anything from a newspaper to a porpoise."

Hout Bay has known several land booms, the first early this century when a railway was planned, and another a few years later when some optimist announced that a fast steamer service would operate between Table Bay and

Hout Bay. It was the motor-car which turned Hout Bay into a suburb without destroying the charm of this valley of milk and cream, cabbages and carrots and water-melons.

Cape Town's northern suburbs have grown so fast that you can still meet old residents who remember going out hunting in the bush which is now covered with houses and hotels, shops and garages. Strange to say, the game has not all departed from Cape Town's doorstep. Parow has a municipal farm (between the town and the national road) where steenbok, grysbok and duiker graze within sight of the city glare; where guinea fowl scuttle away into the bush. People who keep poultry on the Bellville outskirts have trapped civets in recent years, but only after losing a good many chickens and ducks.

Tygerberg is the name of the hills that loom over the flat northern suburbs. These hills were not especially noteworthy for leopards; they gained the name because of the unusual

dark patches on the slopes, like a leopard's spots. The name appears on a map drawn only five years after Van Riebeeck's landing. Among the farms on these slopes are some given out in the early years of the Cape settlement, farms where the wheat has been reaped and cattle have fattened for centuries.

Dodekraal, an old farm on the northern side of the Tygerberg, was granted in 1698. Why give a name like "dead kraal" to a fine property? Dr. G. B. D. de Villiers, who was born on the farm, once related his theory of the origin to me. Down the kloof flows the Elsie's Kraal River, and there is a drift on the farm through the river. People crossing the drift in the Dutch East India days would say: "*Wy gingen door de Kraal*", referring of course to the Elsie's Kraal River. So the farm came to be known as Doordekraal. The name has always appeared on maps as Dodekraal - much to the disgust of the farm owners.

Another old farm is Lovenstein (originally Lobenstyn), granted in, 1701 by Willem

Adrian van der Stel to a Frenchman named Poussion. In return, Poussion had to hand over one-tenth of his grain crop to the Company. Soon afterwards the farm passed to Hendrik Oostwald Eksteen, a prominent settler who was a member of the burgher council, the matrimonial court, and a well-known wine merchant and owner of fishing boats. Lovenstein has a sturdy thatched homestead built to resist every freak of weather and every other disaster save fire.

An architect who visited Lovenstein half a century ago reported sentimentally that it was one of those places "where man and his home are in accord with one another". He said it was typical of the character of the pioneers from Holland, a house that might have been transported bodily from South Zeeland; simple, broad and strong, so that the buildings corresponded with men of solemn word and mood, slow speech and measured pace. It was built to endure. The shutters were small and thick, like the doors and walls. The roof was an almost

solid pack of stone slabs cemented with shell-lime and laid on thick boards over heavy rafters, and covered with thatch nearly a foot thick.

Another old Tygerberg farm (now sub-divided) was Van Riebeeck's Hof. For many years a spring on this farm has provided South Africa with a celebrated natural table water. It was regarded as a medicine last century, especially valuable for stomach complaints. This spring runs strongly, and the water is bottled just as it comes out of the ground. Some other alkaline springs in the neighbourhood have dried up.

Even closer to the city than the farms I have mentioned is De Grendel, first granted to Booij Booijsen who arrived at the Cape in the sixteennineties. The estate, with its famous Friesland cattle, is now the property of Sir G. de Villiers Graaff, and it includes three neighbouring farms: Plattekloof, Montagu Gardens and Zevenpannetjes. De Grendel is not more than twenty minutes by car from Adderley Street.

Wealthy old Claas Meyboom owned Plattekloof early in the eighteenth century, and he lived there with his daughter Abbetje. One night the governor's hunter, Rudolf Allemann, was entertained there to supper, and Meyboom intended to give his guest a good bedroom. For some unexplained reason, however, Abbetje decided that the hunter would have to sleep beside the kitchen fire like a slave. Allemann realised that this was an insult, and he never visited the farm again. He rose in the Company's service however, until the villainous Governor van Noodt imprisoned him unjustly.

Abbetje broke down and wept when she heard this news. Allemann was released soon afterwards, as he was the only man at the Castle who knew how to erect a huge tent which Van Noodt intended using on a journey into the country. The unpredictable Van Noodt now began to favour Allemann, and took it into his head to foster a romance between Allemann and Abbetje Meyboom. After dinner one night Van Noodt told Abbetje that he had an eligible young man in view

for her. "Provided he seeks my hand of his own free will and not because of your Excellency's command," replied Abbetje.

Rudolf Allemann was willing. Van Noodt hurriedly arranged a ball at the Castle to celebrate the engagement. Three weeks later Allemann was promoted, and he and Abbetje were married in the Groote Kerk. One mystery has never been explained - the strange behaviour of Abbetje Meyboom that night on the Tygerberg farm.

Just to the north of the Tygerberg are the hills and district known as the Koeberg. This is another very early Cape name. I have seen a statement that it was given because of the hippo (zeekoe) which were found in the Diep River, which meanders through the Koeberg district. Here, as in the Tygerberg, the first settlers were Company's men in charge of cattle posts. Freeman were granted land not long afterwards; and old families such as the Van Niekerks (who started farming at Bloemendal in 1702) and the Mosterts are still living in the area.

Visser's Hok is the oldest farm in the Koeberg, named after Hendrik Visser, a Company's official who was stationed there in 1685. The present house bears the date 1768, but the *ringmuur*, the white wall enclosing about eighteen morgen round the homestead, must be much older. Visser's Hok supplied the Governor's table with wheat, meat and poultry for a long period. Years ago it was possible to row fairly large boats into the Diep River from Table Bay and pull them up the river to Visser's Hok, there to be loaded with farm produce.

For a century Visser's Hok was owned by the Laubschers. The homestead has high gables, large cool rooms with timbered ceilings, and a great hall where sliding doors were withdrawn for dancing. Under the house are the slave quarters. Instruments of torture used during the eighteenth century remained in the cellar until recent years. When England and Holland were at war late in the eighteenth century a number of English soldiers, captured on their way to

India, lived at Visser's Hok as prisoners-of-war. This old farm was the first halt outside Cape Town in the days when mail coaches ran to Malmesbury once a week.

Mosselbank, Klein Olifantskop, Diemersdal, Fisantkraal, Goede Ontmoeting, Kuiperskraal, Maastricht, Hoog Gelegen, Meerendal, Ongegund, Contermanskloof, Eversdal - these are also among the oldest farms in the Tygerberg and Koeberg, and thus among the oldest in Southern Africa. Military posts were set up to protect the farmers from Hottentots and Bushmen. The farmers soon prospered, and within twenty years a *vryburger* in the Tygerberg who had not six hundred sheep and a hundred head of cattle was reckoned a poor fellow.

Many farmers in the Tygerberg still cling to cattle and wheat. More than a century ago, however, a few bold spirits planted vineyards and began producing a dry white, wine of good quality. They sold it in Cape Town after struggling along sand tracks in their oxwagons.

Collison was one wine merchant, Bosman was the other; and occasionally, when these cellars were full and there was no market, the unhappy farmers ran their wine into Table Bay to spare their oxen the heavy drag home. Nowadays the experts at Stellenbosch University will tell you that more than twenty farms on the Tygerberg slopes are yielding some of the finest of all Cape wines, dry red table wines as well as white, and some sherry and port types.

Pride of the district is Diemersdal, which produces wine and fruit, grain and cattle - the farm that Simon van der Stel granted to Sneewind, the fanner whose widow married Colonel Diemer.

Eversdal, to the south of Durbanville, was nicknamed Vyeboom by the farmers who chose to outspan there so that they could enjoy the wild figs. I believe some of the old trees are still alive. (Another farm that was famous for its trees was Maastricht, where a devout farmer planted a grove of oaks in the form of a cross.) Eversdal was once menaced by hyenas. The old

wolfhuisie, baited with a live sheep, last caught a hyena in 1819, but it still remains on the farm as a museum-piece. Strange to say, another marauder, the rooikat or lynx, has not yet been exterminated. This handsome wild cat was regarded as a rarity in the old Cape districts at the end of last century, though it is still probably more numerous than its cousin the leopard. It has tufted ears and amber eyes. The skin makes a grand kaross, and it crackles with static electricity when stroked; so a rooikat kaross is the old country remedy for rheumatism. A fine *rooikat* weighing over fifty pounds was shot by Mr. J. Visser in the Koeberg district in 1950. He had lost twenty lambs, all killed by these raiders.

Such are the survivors of the wild and distant past of the Cape settlement. Those vryburgers with their farms of sixty morgen were the frontiersmen of their day, and they had to promise that they would remain on their farms for twenty years. Hyenas have vanished from the Tygerberg, and the hippo are hunted no more under the Koeberg.

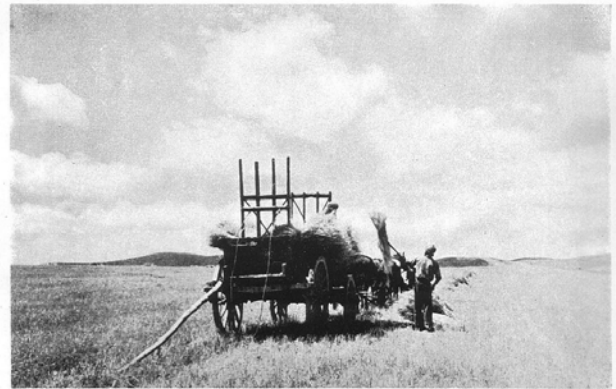
Only the breath of old age lingers, a farming tradition almost as old as the Cape.

CHAPTER 14 IN THE WHEAT BELT

People of the Western Province wheat belt have an unmistakeable *bry*, a rolling of the letter "r" in a manner subtly different from any other Afrikaans accent. General Smuts always gave as perfect an example of the famous Malmesbury *bry*, in English or Afrikaans, as any son of the Swartland ever born. I am told that this *bry* is a Huguenot legacy, and that other Afrikaners sound more German when using "r" words.

The land of the *bry* runs for a hundred miles and more, from the very outskirts of Cape Town to the Piketberg district. Wheat is grown in other areas besides this irregular plain between the mountains and the sea. Nevertheless, the Swartland is the greatest wheat belt in South Africa, the stretch that produces a million bags in a good season.

I once attempted to explain the name Swartland by the fact that the *renosterbos*, all too common there, darkens the ground when it turns black in winter. No one has contradicted me, but I have since heard a theory that the first white explorers to reach the Malmesbury site, the military patrol under Corporal Winter-vogel, found coal black soil round the mineral spring and gave it the obvious name. Elsewhere in the district the unploughed land is usually a reddish-brown colour.



"Wheat is grown in other areas besides this irregular plain between the mountains and the sea. Nevertheless, the Swartland is the greatest wheat belt in South Africa, the stretch that produces a million bags in a good season."

Hunters were sent into the Swartland during the first half century of the Cape settlement. In the *Oude Wildschutte Boek* you may read the names of the men who relieved the meat shortage by bringing down such vanished game as eland and hartbees. (The largest buck I ever shot there was a duiker an Klaver Vlei.) About forty elephants roamed the valley called Groene Kloof at that time, but they were tuskless and the hunters left them alone. Groene Kloof has become the Darling district in the course of time, and I find it hard to imagine that land of spring flowers and cream as elephant country.

Salt pans were discovered by the early hunters, and some of these valuable pans are still being worked after two and a half centuries. Burgerspan, Koekiespan, Rooipan, Kompanjiespan, Swartwater, Ysterfontein, Grootwater and Reeboksfontein all appear on early maps. Kolbe, the old traveller, found slaves loading wagons with salt. He said it was fine white

salt, enough for the whole Cape garrison and for export.

It was the Yzerfontein salt pan which presented me, in August 1956, with one of the most vivid scenes in the whole world of birds. The pan was full of fresh rain water, and hundreds, if not thousands of flamingos had gathered there. I stopped my car in wonder and walked cautiously through the reeds to the edge of the vlei. Everywhere my eyes rested on the coral of the flamingos. Some strode through the water, grotesque bills curving downwards, necks coiling like snakes as they raked the mud for their food. Others showed grace and beauty even when standing on one leg. Here was a pageant of massed flamingos. They came down from the sky like flames, scarlet bands under their broad black-edged wings mirrored in the vlei. Here was a living rainbow. Blazing squadrons of birds streamed overhead, long necks and long pink legs stretched out in line.

This was a noisy sanctuary, for the air was filled with the beating and whirring of wings, the piping and rustling, croaking and crying and gagging of the exquisite flamingos. Other birds were there: pelicans and wild geese, sandpipers and wild duck, white egrets, herons, snipe and reed warblers, waterhen and reedhen. But always the scene was dominated by the splendour of the tall flamingos.

Farms in this area were given out very early in the eighteenth century. Klaver Vlei, my favourite, a place of happy memories for me, was among the earliest farms in the district. Tequila (1703) to the north of the present town of Malmesbury, was the first Swartland cattle post to be established. One year later Klaver Vlei was being used by the bold and rebellious Henning Huysing as a cattle run. Huysing left the Cape to denounce Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel in Holland, and the farm passed to the governor's henchman Starrenberg. The farm reverted to the Dutch East India Company later and was used for horse-

breeding. But it was not until Sebastian van Reenen bought the farm from the Company in 1791 that the gabled homestead, large stables and bell tower were built. This explorer and adventurer, and his brothers Johannes and Jacob, were responsible for many enterprises, and they introduced woolled sheep into the district. William Duckitt, the English agricultural expert, was the next owner. He exchanged his farm High Constantia for Klaver Vlei in 1815 and lived there happily until his death ten years later. Duckitt, a most intelligent and observant man, started a diary in which each day's work at Klaver Vlei was carefully recorded. The huge leather-bound volume was shown to me by Mr. Martin Ruperti, a descendant of William Duckitt and until recently owner of the farm. The keeping of the diary has become a Klaver Vlei tradition. For a century and a half each day's work and events have been conscientiously recorded without a single break. Prices received for wheat and livestock, wages paid to labourers, quantities of grain planted and reaped, details of the

ploughs and sickles and scythes used, the vagaries of the seasons and all the whims of nature are to be found in volume after volume. It is a priceless record and microfilm copies are preserved in the Cape archives.

Wine made by William Duckitt was praised by Lieutenant James Holman, R.N., the blind traveller who rode about the Cape on horse-back in the eighteen-twenties. Holman attended a birthday party given by the Duckitts on the Ganse Kraal farm in honour of Jacobus van Reenen, son of the man who had been sent out in search for the Grosvenor survivors. Many guests came from distant farms, and a sumptuous dinner was served.

When the health of the host was proposed a *bokaal* was put on the table, a half pint wine glass kept for state occasions. It was filled to the brim, and the guest was expected to empty it at a draught. Thus the glass made the round of the table. "It was by no means a disagreeable penalty when it is filled with such fine old hock as was drunk on this occasion, made on

Mr. William Duckitt's estate," remarked Holman. "After a few songs the ladies retired, and the *bokaal* reappeared to do them homage."

Duckitt nearly lost his home the year after he bought it. Slaves lived in the loft, and one night they set the thatch on fire by accident. Fortunately the house had an exceptionally thick *brandsolder* of clay bricks, and that prevented the fire from spreading down below. But the front gable was lost, and the builder who replaced it failed to match it with the fine curves of the end gables.

The farm passed to William Duckitt's eldest son William. Duckitt's widow lived there until her death in 1843. She had been Mary Whitbread, a daughter of the well-known English brewing family. Her father had helped to finance King George III. A silver candle snuffer bearing the mark G III R is among the heirlooms on the farm. It seems that a Miss Duckitt was among Queen Charlotte's ladies-in-waiting. Another interesting relic of a

different sort is a model of the famous double-furrow plough invented by William Duckitt of Esher in Surrey, father of the Duckitt who settled at the Cape.

Duckitt the settler brought three sons to the Cape with him: William, already mentioned, Frederick and Charles. Frederick owned the farm Groote Post adjoining Klaver Vlei. He married Hildagonda Versfeld; and one of their daughters was the Hildagonda Duckitt who wrote the most successful Cape cookery book ever published, Hilda's "Where is It?"

My own happy memories of Klaver Vlei are of days in the veld, walking many miles to shoot a buck or guinea fowl. I remember the south-east wind on my face; the snorting of the horses; grilled mutton and pork chops, with a choice of sherry, brandy, red wine or beer when we met the wagon at lunch time. Jannie Kirsten, with his old-fashioned high collar and leggings and hammer-gun, divining for water with twigs of *wildedagga*. Martin Ruperti, our host, talking about his favourite dish - tortoise

pie. The gables of the homestead glowing in the late afternoon sun as we trudge in line uphill through the heavy sand along the river bank.

In this countryside there are pleasures that never change. I can understand why that English gentleman, William Duckitt, became rooted on this lovely farm. "Mr. Sebastian van Reenen's wheat was by far the best I saw in any part of the country," Duckitt wrote when he first saw the farm which he was to own later. "The land is uncommonly good, a blue colour, strong loam. Sebastian van Reenen has given two thousand dollars for an English stallion and three hundred and ninety-six dollars for a young Dutch bull. This shows a desire to get forward, and in a few years when the country is better inhabited it will be found wonderfully productive."

In the family museum at Klaver Vlei you can see Duckitt's watch, the furniture he brought from England, and a miniature revealing the

man himself: a clean-shaven man with a long, thoughtful face and brown eyes.

It is hard to imagine the Darling district without this great farmer's descendants. When the centenary of Darling was celebrated in the spring of 1953 Miss Charlotte Duckitt, aged eighty-seven, impersonated her aunt Hildagonda. She remembered her aunt collecting the *balseminie* (nemesia) seeds in the district and sending them to a firm in England. Before long the delicate flowers were being cultivated in gardens all over the world; but they are still seen at their best growing wild along the edges of the Darling wheat fields. No wonder old Doctor Lichtenstein observed: "A man could scarcely explore this country without becoming a naturalist."

Darling village, like many others, was founded when the Dutch Reformed Church bought the farm Langfontein for a new church and dorp. Charles Darling was governor of the Cape at the time. The cream for which Darling has become renowned was first made on a

commercial scale by two Swedish dairymen, Moller and Threnström, who settled in the village at the end of last century.

Only thirteen miles south of Darling is the Moravian mission village of Mamre.⁸ The new road by-passes the thatched cottages where two thousand coloured people live snugly amid their fruit trees and oaks and gardens; but now and again I take the old road through the village. You may envy the people of this quiet old backwater when I tell you that they pay a property rate of twenty shillings a year for a building lot and ten shillings for each land or garden lot. A fee of twenty shillings is collected on a thousand bundles of thatch, but a householder may gather firewood for his own use free of charge.

At one time Mamre was one of the chief sources of Cape Town's domestic cooks. Many of the younger women now prefer factory life.

⁸ See "So few are Free" by Lawrence G. Green (Timmins) for details of Mamre.

Housewives of a certain age sigh for the days when it was only necessary to drive out to Mamre to secure a good servant who was happy to accept a wage of three pounds a month.

Malmesbury town started on the farm Kersfontein, round the mineral spring with the black soil which I have already mentioned. As far back as 1745 the widow Van der Westhuizen accepted £175 so that a church could be built on Kersfontein. About twenty people were living there at the time; and more than half a century later, when Burchell passed that way, the village was only just beginning to take shape.

I have mentioned the two prime ministers, General Smuts and Dr. Malan, as sons of the Malmesbury district. Riebeek West claims both of them. Smuts was born at Boplaas (also known as Ongegund) at one end of the village; while Alles Verloren where Malan was born is three miles away at the other end. A fact which is not so widely known is that a third prime

minister, General Hertzog, was born only thirty miles away and spent part of his childhood on his father's farm Amoskuil in the Swartland.

I know a white-haired doctor who rode to his patients on horseback in the Swartland before the end of last century. He is Dr. Louis Biccard of Durbanville, a member of the oldest medical family in South Africa. His grandfather's brother was a surgeon in the Batavian Army at the Cape in 1802; and his uncle, Dr. F. L. C. Biccard, wrote the first South African medical book: "Volksgenees-kunde voor Zuid-Afrika", published in 1866 by J. C. Juta, Cape Town.

"My uncle grew up in the Swartland and practised at Malmesbury, but I first met him when he was medical superintendent on Robben Island," Dr. Biccard told me. "His book of home remedies was my first medical text-book. He pointed out that nothing specially applicable to South African conditions, local ailments, climate and the way of life of the people had ever been published. The book instructed remote farmers on the treat-

ment of face pains, headaches and hypochondria, and the way to deal with poisoning by such things as mushrooms, bitter almonds, honey, crawfish and mussels. He also had treatments for the bites of mad dogs, scorpions, spiders and bees. He recommended certain Cape plants and herbs, such as crushed buchu leaves and wildedagga; and a mouth-wash of Hottentot's fig juice for toothache. His snake-bite treatment consisted of binding the limb, sucking out the poison and then burning the wound with a red-hot iron."

Thus inspired, young Louis Biccard studied at Edinburgh for five years and went on to Vienna before returning home as a qualified doctor. It was in 1897 that he rode out of Hopefield to attend his first Swartland patients. In his saddle-bags were a few simple but useful drugs and medicines, morphia, laudanum with bismuth and chalk mixture for stomach troubles, and a cough mixture. He had an old-fashioned horn type stethoscope and the essential surgical instruments.

"When the doctor was wanted, someone galloped to Hopefield on horseback," Dr. Biccard recalled. "On two occasions I had to enucleate an eye to save the other eye - kitchen-table surgery without the aid of a nurse. I had to give the chloroform myself. Both patients recovered. I could not send them into hospital in Cape Town, for that would have taken more than a day. In fact, country doctors rarely sent a patient into town. There were no ambulances. The drive would have injured many patients. We dealt with everything on the spot, for the practice of medicine was much simpler in those days and there was nothing the Cape Town hospital staffs could do that we could not do."

Dr. Biccard looked down the years on the emergencies he had faced alone on these distant farms. Children with diphtheria struggling for breath while he carried out the tracheotomy. The triplets he delivered at Hopefield long ago without a midwife's aid. (They all grew up to be healthy adults). Arms and legs

amputated. The problems that had to be solved alone, with the nearest medical consultant four hours away by Cape cart. German measles or scarlet fever? Sometimes an ailment could be diagnosed by the odour. The country doctor gained experience in the hard way, and gathered knowledge which has yet to appear in the text-books.

"It was do or die," Dr. Biccard went on. "Fractured legs were always treated at home, splinted with a board from the farmyard and a sheet, kept in position with the aid of a cotton reel and a sandbag. In many serious illnesses, however, the means of diagnosis did not exist. We spoke of a 'kink in the bowel' instead of appendicitis, and often there was nothing we could do about it. People did not live as long as they do now. And yet, I believe the cancer percentage may have been smaller. People lived on simple diets and they were more sober. Old people took one small tot of brandy, and perhaps a glass of wine at dinner. Life was less complicated and healthier. Farming was

on a smaller scale and the farmer had more leisure."

It was not always such an easy life for the doctor, however, and Dr. Biccard found that it often took half a day to visit one patient. He charged ten shillings an hour for such visits; then he would return home, change horses, eat a hasty lunch, and ride off again. Dentistry was a sideline. He pulled out thousands of teeth before regular dentists arrived. Farmers also expected him to act as veterinary surgeon; and he helped many a cow-in-calf and sow.

Once a year in June all the doctors of the Swartland gathered on the cattle farm Langefontein near the Langebaan lagoon. Dr. Biccard met his colleagues from Malmesbury, Darling, Vredenburg and Moorreesburg; and for a week they went out shooting every day and sat discussing patients every night. The farm was owned by the father of Dr. Steyn of Moorreesburg. During one such week the doctors shot forty steenbok. "It was our only

holiday, and somehow our patients survived until we got back to work," smiled Dr. Biccard.

Hopefield is about the same age as Darling, and it was named after two Cape civil servants, Hope and Field. The village was laid out on the farm Langekuil, along the bank of the Sout River. It was the natural choice, for the main road from Cape Town to Saldanha Bay passed over the site.

The district is a dune world, and many farmers have to fight the sand. Hopefield people talk about *duineveld* and *bog-grond*. The *duineveld* is covered with reeds and *taaibos* shrubs, with the large candle-bushes standing alone like trees. Rain sinks into this sandy soil quickly. But the *bog-grond* is different; thorns and a smaller type of candle-bush grow there, and the rain runs off and forms pools.

Vredenburg has been peaceful for a long time now. When the village was established about a century ago, however, two neighbours named Baard and Loubser quarrelled violently over

the division of the ground and went to law. The lawyers did well out of it, and the new dorp became known as Prosesfontein. Long after the legal processes had ended a meeting of church authorities decided to change the name to Vredenburg.

Piketberg is a name that goes back to Isbrand Goske, governor ten years after Van Riebeeck, who set up a military outpost there (*a piket* in Nederlands) while he was having trouble with the Hottentots. The farms Heuningberg and Groenvlei were given out early in the eighteenth century; and the early farmers lived a dangerous frontier life, with Bushmen, stray Hottentots and run-away slaves raiding their cattle. Once every farmer had to clear out and make for Cape Town. In a fight that followed, more than sixty Bushmen were killed. Not until the end of the eighteenth century were the Bushmen finally driven away into the north.

From range to range the Piketberg valley is an ocean of wheat. If you drive up the Piketberg mountain, however, a new scene opens before

you and you are in a secluded world of dog-rose hedges, orange trees and fruit orchards. Behind these mountain farms there is a romantic story, told in various forms. I had the authentic narrative, however, from Mrs. Jessie Bucton, a daughter of the Versfeld who built the famous road up the mountain.

According to local legend the first white men to live on the mountain were two sailors, an Englishman and his Dutch shipmate, who deserted and found sanctuary in this wilderness. After them, in 1780, came Mouton, the first real farmer. He settled at the place known later as Mouton's Vlei, planted oaks and made a garden. After his death the place became derelict. Years passed, and a number of adventurous farmers tried to make a living on the mountain, but nearly all were driven out. Leopards were troublesome. The lack of a road led to bankruptcy.

J. P. E. Versfeld, the man who turned the mountain into a paradise, was born in 1838 at Klaasenbosch, the Wynberg wine farm. He was

related to the Van Reenen's of the Darling district; and he lived on several of the Croene Kloof farms before he left school. Mr. Riley, a tutor on one of these farms, composed a ballad referring to Versfeld:

*But see who comes,
now ladies all take heed,
Ruperti's rival,
killing John indeed!
Those sunny auburn locks upon his brow!
My muse says 'carrots!'
Muse, you're vulgar now.*

Versfeld was musical, with a good voice, and fond of poetry. As a young man he took charge of a Caledon farm, and while he was there he met and married a Miss Elizabeth Metcalf. Then he moved on to an uncle's farm Preekstoel, near Malmesbury, saved a few hundred pounds and bought a flock of merino sheep. He often declared that his father had never had to give him anything except a horse.

One day in 1867 Versfeld saw that a farm named Langberg was for sale on Piketberg mountain. Many wise heads were shaken when Versfeld bought it, for no one had made a success of farming in that remote area. Versfeld moved in with his young wife and two small daughters. A springless wagon carried their goods up the rough track to the heights of the mountain. The Versfelds and their servants walked.

Among the servants were Dantjie Engelbrecht and his wife and children. Dantjie had worked for Versfeld as a shepherd at Caledon. Another coloured couple left Preekstoel with the expedition, and remained with the Versfelds. Large sections of the coloured population on the mountain today trace their descent from those two faithful couples.

Langberg cost Versfeld three hundred pounds. The house had mud floors. It was without ceilings and there was no glass in the windows. However, a new wagon had been abandoned there. The previous owner had lost his cattle owing to

lamsiekte, and he had no oxen to draw the wagon. Versfeld had learnt at Caledon that cattle did not die of *lamsiekte* on veld that had been grazed over by merino sheep. He looked forward to his new enterprise without fear, and even when a leopard jumped into the kraal on the first night and took a sheep, he was not dismayed.

Versfeld had many encounters with leopards, and one or two narrow escapes. As a rule he shot the marauders with *lopers*, and sometimes he set gun-traps. It was a primitive life in many ways. All the babies born on the mountain were carried down the bridle-path by the servants to be christened in the Piketberg church. That was a journey of three hours. The village was without a doctor when the Versfelds settled on the mountain, but the magistrate, the clergyman and the schoolmaster lived there. On the mountain there was the Lukas family at Platberg, making the celebrated roll tobacco which still bears their name. It was longer and thinner in the leaf than the so-called boer tobacco of the period and it had a typical aroma. The cured leaf was twisted in a

rope for the roll. Versfeld learnt the process, and for many years tobacco and sheep were his mainstays.

After two years at Langberg, Versfeld bought the farm Voorste Vlei not far away and established another flock of sheep and a tobacco garden. During a bitter winter the sun did not appear for a fortnight, all the lambs died and Mrs. Versfeld's health appeared to be suffering as a result of the climate and the remote life. Versfeld drafted advertisements on several occasions with the idea of selling his farms. Mrs. Versfeld tore them up. One of her sisters came to stay with her. The farms prospered. In 1872 Versfeld was able to buy Mouton's Vlei and build a new house there for his family.

"Mouton's Vlei was a little paradise after Langberg, which had a finer view but which was rather bleak and exposed," Mrs. Bucton told me. "Mouton had left eighty tall, thick-stemmed orange trees in a grove, mighty pears of the sweet saffron variety, a row of walnut trees, a large peach orchard, apricots, almonds, figs and apples,

quince and pomegranate hedges, clumps of bamboo and poplar, and a vineyard. And the whole place cost only eight hundred pounds."

Versfeld planted more trees. His oak avenue, which he completed in 1887 from the house to the lower garden, was called Jubilee Avenue in honour of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. Versfeld's own family grew, and this goodhearted man also made himself responsible for a number of other children whose parents had met with misfortune. Nevertheless, there was a large and happy crowd of children up at Mouton's Vlei. A governess arrived from England to preside over the schoolroom. Dances were held every Friday evening in winter, with the coloured labourers playing their fiddles and concertinas. Every child learnt to ride.

During one of his journeys to Saldanha Bay to buy salted snoek for his labourers, Versfeld bought day-old ostrich chicks. He paid twenty pounds apiece for eight of them, and they formed the nucleus of a prosperous venture. Versfeld went into partnership with his

brother-in-law Peter van Breda, acquired Geelbek farm on the Langebaan lagoon, and sent the young birds there. (I saw their descendants running wild on the farm eighty years afterwards.) Before long Versfeld was making a thousand a year from ostrich feathers alone. He bought a town house at Wynberg and took some of his family there - a journey of two days from the farm. He also invested in grain land near Piketberg to keep his elder sons busy.

When the feather boom collapsed in 1885, Versfeld took his family back to the mountain farm. No one lamented the return, for all regarded Mouton's Vlei as their home. Four years later Versfeld built the pass which was the greatest achievement of his busy life. He thought it would be a long and expensive business; but the shale surface proved easy to work and his twenty coloured labourers were full of enthusiasm.

Every morning Versfeld rode off at dawn on his grey horse Moscow, returning after dark.

He took a day off when his son Jack was born, and that day's work had to be done over again, for the men had made the gradient too steep. The stroke of genius which made Versfeld's Pass famous was the design which turned three hairpin bends into loops. A road with sharp corners would not have been safe for ox-wagons. In three months Versfeld's road was an accomplished fact, and only in very recent years have the engineers been able to improve upon it.

Sad to relate, Versfeld's health failed and he was sent to England for treatment. Nothing could be done. He died in London, far from his mountain home, at the age of fifty-eight. His widow had to bring up the younger boys without him; and she remained at Mouton's Vlei until 1923, the year of her death.

Piketberg was the ancestral home of that strange and somewhat mysterious race known as the Griquas. Originally there was a pure Hottentot tribe, the Grigriqua, and these

people seem to have become a mixed group as a result of early contact with the regiments of Germans and others in the service of the Dutch East India Company at the Cape. In time the half-caste Griquas produced leaders, shrewd men who spoke Dutch and were largely civilised. Adam Kok was the first of them, a slave who may have had a white father. Born in 1710, Adam became the Governor's cook; hence the surname Kok. He cooked so well that the Governor rewarded him with his freedom and a loan farm in the Piketberg district. There, in 1746, a son Cornelius was born. Adam Kok also gained possession of land farther north, in the Kamiesberg, and so a migration started which kept the restless Griqua clan moving across the face of South Africa for so many years. The first Adam Kok, who reached the age of ninety, was the great-great grand-father of Adam Kok III who led the great trek of two thousand followers into the unknown country of which Kokstad became the capital.

Evidently there were wealthy coloured people in the Piketberg district at various periods. Court records show that in 1882 a coloured woman named Georgina Novella disappeared. Her son, eight years old at the time, applied in 1909 for leave to presume death. The order was granted, and the son inherited ten thousand pounds which had become due to his mother.

"Swak, swak, Piketberg!" That is the expression Piketberg has supplied to the Afrikaans language, and the origin is to be found, in an amusing true story. In the 'eighties of last century a Hollander artisan wandered from farm to farm doing odd jobs. When he had saved a little money he would visit Piketberg and spend it at the hotel. Not far away was the cemetery. One Saturday night the Hollander went to sleep among the tombstones, unaware of his strange resting place. Next day was Easter Sunday, and a coloured brass band passed the cemetery at daybreak playing religious music. Up sprang the Hollander,

and when he saw the graves all round him he imagined that the Day of judgment had come. Soon afterwards he realised that he alone had risen from the dead. "*Swak, swak, Piketberg!*" he called mournfully. "*Slechts een rechtvaardige!*" (Weak, weak, Piketberg ! Only one righteous person! ").

CHAPTER 15

AMONG THE CEDAR MOUNTAINS

You have seen the Dutch explorers seeking cattle and the cattle farmers in quest of grass, bold spirits crossing Van Riebeeck's "mountains of Africa" into unknown country. So it was when the first white men reached the mountain they called Piketberg and gazed upon the great peaks across the valley, the range we call the Cedarberg.

They had to go on. Jan Danckaert first, then Cruythoff, and Pieter Everaert; on over Bushman tracks and Hottentot trails, over the mountain ranges. After them, early in the eighteenth century, went men whose descend-

ants are still farming along the Olifant's River under the Cedarberg peaks. Jurgen Hanekom secured Modderfontein in 1725, and this is the oldest farm in the valley.

You come to Modderfontein when you have descended Grey's Pass on the far side; a farm with a picturesque store, meeting-place of the farmers in the days before there was a village across the river at Citrusdal. They sold their buchu and other produce there, and bought their coffee and the bamboo brooms made by old MacGregor. I remember a baboon on a pole and the old lilac trees at the store entrance. Behind the store are the old whitewashed buildings of Modderfontein homestead; and six miles up the kloof is the radioactive *badplaas* on MacGregor property, the waters that Leipoldt praised.

However, I was talking of earlier settlers than the young Scot who opened the Modderfontein store towards the end of last century, bought the farmers' oranges and then invested in farms up and down the valley.

More than two centuries ago five Burger brothers struggled over the old, dangerous Kardouw's Pass and established themselves along the river. Schalk Burger, in 1765, put up a homestead on Halwedorsvloer which still stands, with the correct date on the gable. Renosterhoek, Goedemanskraal, Oud Constant, Wageboomsrivier; those are other old farms.

Other old families are the Van der Merwes, the Vissers, the Lubbes, the Carstens and Engelbrechts. Willem van Taak, Hercules Sandberg, Robert Brand, Georg Strauss and Izak Nieuwoudt founded dynasties that left their names on the map and their descendants in the shadow of the Cedarberg and far beyond.

It was not until early last century that anything like a village appeared in the Olifant's River valley. This was the tiny settlement of Jan Dissel's Vlei (previously known as Baviaansberg, for obvious reasons), at the northern end of the Cedarberg range.

Here in 1808 the assistant landdrost Van Ryneveld took up residence. It was high time. For some years this pleasant, favoured spot had been the home of a murderer. Koenraad Fiet was his name, and he preyed upon the cattle buyers sent into the hinterland by Cape Town butchers. He offered them hospitality on their way north, when they had ready cash to buy the cattle, and then he battered their heads in with his club.

Apparently Fiet was caught at last, for old residents have stated that a knobkerrie which he used was kept as a museum piece in the old magistrate's office, and was lost in 1901 when the building was destroyed by fire. Leipoldt wrote a poem round the sinister Koenraad Fiet, describing a stormy evening when the murderer lost all his money while playing cards with a guest. Fiet recovered the money when he buried his victim. Koenraad Fiet's own grave is pointed out to visitors on the outskirts of the village.

Jan Dissel's Vlei was renamed Clanwilliam when the government took an interest in it. More than three hundred Irish Protestant settlers were sent there in 1820, but the scheme was badly organised. William Parker, their leader, was a stormy petrel who laid charges against many officials from the governor downwards, and made a nuisance of himself with his constant attacks on Roman Catholics. He was right about the impossibility of making a living at Clanwilliam, however, and nearly all the Irish settlers departed for more promising country. Those who stuck it out and survived were the Fosters and Fryers, the Shaws, Crowleys, Grisolds and O'Callaghans. There were some first-class artisans among them.

Those literary travellers who light up so many old pages of the past in the Cape seem to have missed the far valleys of the Cedarberg. In 1836, however, we find Sir James Alexander passing that way. He drew attention to the heat, and I do not know of any writer since

Alexander who has failed to record that impression of the place. "Clanwilliam is a village of neat houses, one storey high and arranged in two streets," remarked Alexander. "The number of inhabitants is about two hundred. There is a church and a few shops, and the better sort of houses are provided with good gardens; but situated as Clanwilliam is, in a basin-shaped valley on sand, and surrounded with hills, it is perhaps the hottest place in South Africa. The heat must be very distressing in December, January and February. Those of the white inhabitants who can afford it live during these months on farms or among the Cedar mountains. The nights in the hot seasons are often more stifling than the days. Sleep is denied, and bottles sometimes break in the room with a loud explosion from the heat."

They make stronger bottles nowadays, but the heat goes on. All too often the mercury remains above the one hundred and ten mark for days on end, moving up occasionally to

one hundred and sixteen. Nearly everyone sleeps outside, and some take stretchers down to the river. But the only real relief comes after a forty mile drive to Lambert Bay, where the icy current creates an air-conditioned belt along the coast. People grumble about the heat, yet this is the climate which helps to grow South Africa's finest oranges.

All last century the wild and isolated fastnesses of the Cedarberg formed a background for unusual characters, and for dramas which could not have occurred in the old, settled districts. Thompson, a Cape Town merchant who rode about the remote areas on horseback, discovered a hard-working, prosperous Hottentot named Abraham Zwarts living on a well-developed farm in a nook in the Cedarberg. Zwarts had acres under wheat and tobacco; he was drying fruit for sale in Tulbagh; and he had cattle, goats and sheep. Two dozen children and grandchildren were working on the farm. No white farmer had considered applying for this lonely place.

When the Irish settlers arrived, however, Zwarts was given notice to quit. Captain Synnot, then magistrate, saw the hardship which would be caused and secured a full grant of the farm on perpetual quitrent. Thus Zwarts became the only individual Hottentot in the Cape Colony with a grant of land.

A large clan of Bastards squatted in the Cedarberg with their cattle about the middle of last century. Though they had no legal title, they were left alone by the authorities. Bushmen raiders were still troublesome at that period, however, and there came a time in 1867 when the Bastards decided to take the law into their own hands and teach the Bushmen a lesson. So the Bastards formed a commando, and after a serious raid they followed the Bushman cattle thieves and cornered them in a kloof of the Langeberg to the north of Clanwilliam. The Bushmen defended themselves bravely with bows-and-arrows, but the Bastards had muzzle-loading

guns and they wiped out their enemies to the last man.

Such an encounter naturally came to the ears of the police. An inquiry was ordered, and the Bastards gathered under the kameel-doring trees outside the magistrate's office at Clanwilliam, awaiting the proceedings nervously. They had arranged with one of the old law agents, Jim Osler of Clanwilliam, to represent them. Osler heard their story, pointed out that they might be charged with murder, and advised them quietly to clear out of the colony, into the no-man's-land beyond the Orange River, where the police could not touch them.

Without a moment's delay the Bastards jumped on their horses and galloped out of the village. Pursuit was out of the question. Magistrate and police (two or three constables in those days) watched a cloud of dust rising in the distance. The families of the Bastards followed at their leisure with the cattle and household goods. Thus the Bastards abandoned the Clanwilliam

district and found a new home in South West Africa.

Wherever you go in the Cedarberg you will find men of all colours wearing *velskoene* with light rawhide uppers and rubber soles made from old tyres. These are the celebrated Wupperthal shoes, made at the Rhenish mission in the mountains two hours by car from Clanwilliam. When I drove there with Carel Birkby years ago a farmer who showed us the way described the road as some-what *bergagtig*. That it was mountainous was obvious. But he chilled me when he added: "The worst part is when you come to Wupperthal - watch your driving there."

I closed my eyes at some of the corners while Carel was taking his small car into the steep-sided amphitheatre of the Wupperthal oasis, and I wondered how he would climb out into the world again. He managed it, by a narrow margin. There was only one motor road in those days, and it made me feel that I was

driving over a route intended for pack-donkeys. Now, I am assured, there is a new road out of this sanctuary in the mountains, and the ride is no longer a dramatic experience. I am glad to hear it, for I have often wanted to go back to serene, happy Wupperthal.

It was in 1829 that the Rhenish Mission Society ordained four young men from the Wupper River in the Rhineland for work at the Cape: Von Wurmb, Leipoldt, Zahn and Luckhoff. On arrival, Von Wurmb was sent out to find land for mission settlements. One day he moved slowly north through the Cold Bokkeveld with ox-wagons and pack-horses, and entered the Cedarberg. There he came upon a secluded, fertile valley watered by the Tratra River; a deep oasis, right out of the world, unsettled and unknown, below the high mountains called Tafelberg and Sneekop.

According to the late Dr. Louis Leipoldt, the Rhenish Mission had already purchased land near the mouth of the Olifant's River owned by descendants of Adam Kok, the Griqua leader.

The missionaries were successful in exchanging this land for the valley Von Wurmb had discovered in the Cedarberg. Then the Rev. Johann Gottlieb Leipoldt (grandfather of Dr. Leipoldt) moved in as the first missionary. A number of Hottentots were living in the mountains without guidance of any sort. Moreover, the slaves were soon to be freed, and it was felt that Wupperthal would provide a home for many who would otherwise fall into evil ways.

Leipoldt and his assistants taught the people to tan leather, to make shoes and roll tobacco and snuff, to become blacksmiths and carpenters. At first it was difficult to persuade the Hottentots to worship and work; but within four years Leipoldt had built a parsonage which stands today and the handsome thatched church which is still in use. In that time the congregation had grown to two hundred souls. Today the population of Wupperthal is ten times that number; people who appreciate the untroubled life of a little, self-supporting colony far removed from the ordeals of the cities. They are still making hand-sewn

shoes under the thatched roof where the tanning odour is relieved by the aroma of honey-suckle. Each family has a white, thatched cottage and a vegetable garden. Some of the people grow bush tea and tend the three thousand pear and peach trees irrigated from the river.

South African coin collectors are pleased when they are able to acquire items of the Wupperthal token coinage minted in Germany between 1900 and 1902. These florins, shillings, six-pences and tickets are of tin. Leipoldt mentions gold and silver coins, too, but I have never come across these rarities. Workers at Wupperthal were able to spend their tokens at the mission store. They could not buy wine, as some would have done, although the Wupperthal vineyards have produced good wine. But the strong tobacco with the typical "bite" and high nicotine content was theirs when they wanted it.

A local peculiarity which was still in force when I called on the missionary about twenty years ago was the "daylight losing" time system. My watch showed four in the afternoon as the coffee

was served; but the missionary's clock stood at three thirty. "The time they have in other places doesn't suit us here," was the explanation the missionary's son gave me. His father put it differently. "Some of the children have to come a long way to school here from outlying farms," he explained. "They were arriving half an hour late, so we put our clocks back to bring them here in time."

Wupperthal abides by the law of the land, and by its own laws. Serious crime is rare. Leipoldt used to tell a story, however, of the murder of a girl early this century, when detectives searched Wupperthal but were unable to find the body. At last an old Bushman *slangdokter* was consulted. He was reputed to be a clairvoyant, able to trace lost cattle. The police followed his advice and found the body, and the murderer was sentenced to death at Malmesbury. Among the Crown witnesses was the Bushman. Leipoldt said that the circuit court judge was not at all pleased when the Bushman was unable to describe how he had known where to look for the body.

Years passed before Wupperthal was again disturbed by a tragedy of a different sort. It was during the bitter winter of 1921 that Frederick Krieger, the mail carrier, went to Clanwilliam with the weekly post-bag. He took the short-cut favoured by the Wupperthal people, over Krakadouw mountain, a route suitable only for pack-donkeys and people on foot. On the way back to the mission Krieger was accompanied by two women, Sarah Perrang and Sina Koetie, and three little girls. It seemed that the rain was holding off, but they were caught in an icy downpour on the road to Heuningvlei. This is a mission farm settlement twelve miles from Wupperthal, with oaks and fruit trees and a number of little houses occupied by coloured people. Snow fell as they approached Heuningvlei, and the desperate travellers were looking forward to finding shelter for the night.

To their horror they saw that the river at Heuningvlei was in flood. They shouted for help, and the farm workers came out and stared helplessly. No one could cross the river. There

was no shelter. And so, with the houses and lights and warmth of Heuningvlei only five hundred yards away, Sarah Perrang froze to death. Krieger was still able to talk when a rescue party reached him at last, but he died soon afterwards. Sina Koetie and the three children were unconscious, but warm blankets revived them and their lives were saved.

Missionaries at Wupperthal have done great work for their isolated people, and the mission produced one coloured missionary. This was Johannes Frederick Hein (1844 - 1903), whose father was white and mother coloured. He started life as a shepherd, but the Wupperthal missionary realised that the lad was worthy of all the education he could provide. In due course Hein became the only coloured man to be ordained by the Rhenish Church. He spent his life ministering to the Hottentots in the remote Richtersveld.

Botanists love the Cedarberg range, where first of all the botanical wonders are the cedars themselves. Strange to relate, these rare and

lovely old evergreen trees were left unguarded, ravaged by fire and looted by human vandals, long after other fine timber elsewhere in the Cape had been fully protected. I have seen a report by the chief forest officer issued late last century declaring that conservation in the Cedarberg "would be so costly that it has not been attempted".

Few knew anything about the Cedarberg in those days, and even now the mountain folk are among the most isolated people in South Africa. These grand mountains run parallel with the coast about fifty miles inland, the Cedarberg range proper being about forty miles in length and ending at Clanwilliam. Mountaineers have noticed a resemblance between the Cedarberg and the Hottentots Holland, though the great Cedarberg peaks are higher and flatter. Two centuries ago these mountains were generously sprinkled with gnarled cedar trees (*Widringtonia juniperoides*) from the winter snow line of three thousand feet up to the five thousand feet level and beyond.

Some trees were enormous. A giant cedar that was sawn up early last century gave one thousand feet of planking. When the first telegraph line was set up between Piketberg and Calvinia, cedar poles were used over a distance of nearly two hundred miles. You could fence your farm with cedar poles at nine pence apiece. Thousands of cedar coffins were made. Lintels, bed plates for bridges, gateposts and barrows were other uses. Many a farmer can point to a cedar post which has not decayed after a century in the ground.

Yet this is a timber which many connoisseurs rank above stinkwood. It is yellowish and strongly scented with a resin which seems to repel both insects and damp. I believe the English church at Clanwilliam still has the cedar doors, pews and carved altar fitted long ago. Cedar furniture in the farmhouses of the district shows that the wood takes a fine polish.

Clanwilliam cedars are pyramidal conifers, growing like Christmas trees at first, then

branching out. They grow slowly, and it would be no exaggeration to say that some of the Cedarberg giants are a thousand years old. A botanist who measured a number of cedars last century found a living tree about eighteen feet in girth and seventy feet in height. This was a small specimen, however, compared with the stumps he encountered. One old giant had double the girth of the largest living tree. Today it is hard to find a mature cedar over forty feet high. These trees grow slowly, but conservation may yet produce cedars to rival the giants of last century. Cedars planted forty years ago are now more than twelve feet high.

One of the old-fashioned medical remedies of the Clanwilliam district is a diuretic made from bruised cedar leaves and cones infused with brandy. Dry resin, warmed slightly, is used in a compress on ulcers and tumours.

Clanwilliam cedar, according to the botanists, holds a unique position among the Cape flora. It is confined to that one range of mountains, isolated from the other great forest areas.

Another cedar, *Widdringtonia schwayzii*, exists in Baviaanskloof, Willowmore district, nearly three hundred miles to the east. Other members of the *Widdringtonia* genus are found in South Africa, but they are shrubs and small trees compared with the two cedars. You have to go to Central Africa, Madagascar or Australia to find cedars the size of the Cedarberg specimens. Probably the Cedarberg and Willowmore trees are the last remnants of a vanished, ancient vegetation that once covered much greater areas.

Dead cedars, lying in lonely kloofs like huge white skeletons, may be cut up. Forest officers will also issue permits for the removal of cedars damaged by fire. A little colony of coloured *bergwerkers*, all strong men, saw up the timber and carry the planks out on their back. These men know every inaccessible corner of the mountains, places that are on the map, and some that are not ... Muller-se-Water and Geelvlei, Hartseer and Engelsman-se-kloof. They go out for a week at a time with

bread and mealie-meal and beans in their sacks. Cedarwood fetches a shilling a foot or more in Clanwilliam, and so a good *bergwerker* may earn five pounds a week. But it is work that would break the back of any ordinary man.

When the botanist casts his eyes down from the cedars to the ground, these mountains reveal great wealth of ferns and flowers: I suppose that for the botanist there is no motor drive in the world which will surpass the journey from Pakhuis Pass to Wupperthal in spring. In the mountains are ferns and erica bushes, the red and yellow flowers offering a faint scent. Creepers with orange flowers hang in the poplars round the farm. Vleis are fringed and covered with arums and Watsonias, white orchids and pink sorrels. If you take the narrow footpath from the Pakhuis Pass summit towards Krakadouw you are surrounded in the moist kloofs by lilac Watsonias, blue gladioli, crimson-flowered bushy leucadendrons. Below the waterfalls are yellow-green Osmunda ferns.

Scarlet disas grow round the little pools in summer. The veld reminds the climber of Table Mountain, for snow-white Harveyas, fragrant crassulas and crimson ericas flourish as well. Ixias clothe the mountain slopes. Often you can see the cedars entwined by crimson loranthus and *vrouehaar*, the maidenhair fern.

On all the higher slopes towards the north grows the huge insect-eating *Roridula* plant. This shrub reaches a height of three feet and has star-shaped, lilac flowers and hairy tentacles. A reliable botanist once recorded the spectacle of a small frog in the toils of this plant, struggling valiantly but hopelessly. Beetles and butterflies are often to be seen in the glue-like liquid exuding from the hairs.

"Always firewood, always enough water to bath in, always good camping spots," a mountaineer once remarked to me. "That's why we love the Cedarberg. You can find weird rock formations and lovely kloofs cut off completely from civilisation. Often I have heard the leopards at night - yet a horse that

was left by a forest ranger in a kloof for eighteen months was not attacked. On the top of Sneeuberg, the highest peak, you are nearly seven thousand feet up, surrounded by the finest mountains in the Cape, and you can see everything from Table Mountain to Van Rhynsdorp. You may hire a coloured guide for five shillings a day and a pack donkey for a shilling. And then there are the people, farmers like their forefathers, the old hospitable farmers ..."

He went on to speak of Wit Andries and Swart Andries, two famous Cedarberg characters nicknamed because of the colour of their hair. He talked of the Moordhoek ravine, where a shepherd working for one of the Nieuwoudts long ago was murdered by Bushmen. He spoke of Bushman caves and long-deserted farms with old oaks and fruit trees and flower gardens.

"I brought a little cedarwood away with me, and sometimes I light my pipe with it," ended the mountaineer. "If you know the Cedarberg

and you want the whole majestic range to rise before you, light your pipe with glowing cedarwood."

CHAPTER 16

OLD STELLENBOSCH

Stellenbosch, the oldest country town in South Africa, once had a larger white population than Cape Town. One thinks of gracious Stellenbosch as a quiet and religious university town. That is its essential character. Yet the story of Stellenbosch has many unexpected pages. Where is there a town which has not known drama and scandal, disaster and shock?

Two professors, both Afrikaners, once wrote a joint work in which they summed up the atmosphere of Stellenbosch in these words: "The Afrikaner has remained essentially a Dutchman and he feels, consciously or unconsciously, maybe reluctantly, this parentage, notwithstanding differences due to separation, mixture with other European elements, climatic and economic influences. It is not a mere accident

that Stellenbosch is mainly a Dutch and Dutch-educational centre. It is the outcome of the stubbornness with which the Afrikaner has adhered to his language and traditions."

Stellenbosch was an uninhabited island when it gained its name. Simon van der Stel, travelling through the country soon after his arrival, came upon a river, now the Eerste River, with a double course which enclosed a large island thickly clothed with trees. Here the governor and his party rested. Simon was enchanted with the beauty of the woods. Someone told him the place was called Wilde Bosch. He changed it by coupling part of his own name with *bosch* in memory of a happy summer's day on the shady island. That was in 1679, and before the year ended the first farmer had settled there.

The village was founded during the following year, when the land surveyor prepared a diagram which enabled eight families of free burghers to establish themselves. Thus twenty-eight years had passed since Van Riebeeck's landing before the first village was formed outside the Cape

Peninsula. The first step towards settling the hinterland had been taken.

Stellenbosch soon became a place of importance, with Johannes Mulder as landdrost (at a salary of two pounds a month), four heemraden, and a courthouse. It was reported that the children were "growing up wild", so Sybrand Mandeken was appointed as school-master. He also acted as sick visitor and read a sermon on Sundays. All the territory outside the Cape Peninsula fell under the authority of Stellenbosch, and it was many years before this huge area dwindled owing to settlement in new districts.

Fire destroyed the village, apart from two houses, early in the eighteenth century. A slave was carrying a torch with the idea of lighting the landdrost's pipe when the south-easter blew the sparks on to the thatch. And that was not the last disastrous fire that Stellenbosch was to know. However, the cottages were re-built, a prison was provided, and one thousand oaks from Rondebosch were planted in the streets.

Stellenbosch, with its corps of volunteers and commando of farmers, was expected to preserve law and order in the interior. Run-away slaves were troublesome, but I discovered a minute in the Castle journal which suggested that there were other desperate characters in those early days, and made me realise that some queer adventure tales had gone beyond recall.

"Servants of the Company have deserted and fled with other offenders *and Englishmen and other foreigners* towards the wilderness and the mountains, leading a thievish and godless life," stated the minute. "Every attempt to arrest them has failed. The probability of their repentance and disgust with the life led by them has been considered, and Fiscal Blesius proposes and the Council agrees to clear this Colony of all such pernicious people, of whom only evil can be expected, by pardoning them all except incendiaries, burglars, cattle thieves and highwaymen. Within two months they are to report themselves at the Castle. If not, and

should they be captured afterwards, they will be punished as deserters, vagrants and disturbers of the peace."

Apparently no one accepted this kind offer. Those who roamed beyond the safety of the Cape settlement preferred the lawless life. Even at Stellenbosch the burghers tore down placards and other orders so that they could plead ignorance of unpopular laws. But I wish some document would come to light, like the vivid journal of Wikar, throwing some light on the Englishmen who ventured into the unknown Cape during the first decade of the eighteenth century.

In those early years Stellenbosch was not only burnt out. It was menaced by Hottentots and Bushmen. Two houses were washed away and wheat crops were damaged when the Eerste River burst its banks. Lions, leopards and wild dogs attacked the cattle. For three years the sheep died from disease. Slaves took to drink all too eagerly and stayed away from work. The last elephants had not yet departed.

Hercules van Loon, the first full-time minister at Stellenbosch, committed suicide (for some reason which was never discovered) by cutting his throat with a pen-knife. Those were the days of severe church discipline. It appears that the young, small congregation had a number of drunkards in its midst. At a meeting of the Kerkraad it was resolved: "That Maria Holst should be remonstrated with on account of drunkenness, with the threat that she would be suspended and forbidden the Lord's Table if she continued." Other names were recorded for the same offence, and some were suspended.

When a new church was built the Rev. Hendricus Beck (in 1722) agreed to a proposal to raise funds by means of a lottery! The government assented, and thus the debt on the building operations was wiped out. This must have been the only such episode in the history of the Dutch Reformed Church at the Cape, and I would not have believed it if I had not found it recorded on the authority of the Rev. A. Dreyer, a former archivist of the church.

The Rev. Eduard Arentz, a Stellenbosch minister just over two centuries ago, denounced not only the youth of the village but some of the older people. He declared that he was "bowed down under their sinful habits of card-playing, lottery games and dancing". Arentz was especially outspoken about the dancing of the period. "Study the behaviour of the dancers, men and women - the turns, the frolics, the handclapping," he said. "It is dishonourable, vain, reckless and wanton."

A banished prince and two rajahs from the Dutch East Indies were held as "prisoners of state" at Stellenbosch in the middle of the eighteenth century, and a house was bought for them. The Abbe de la Caille was there soon afterwards, the pioneer astronomer who catalogued the southern stars. On this occasion, however, he seems to have been more interested in discovering people who could speak French. All the original Huguenot refugees were dead, but their children were able to converse with him.

The Abbe, an epicure like so many educated Frenchmen, noted that while fresh meat and fish were abundant, the country people preferred salt and smoked fish and meat. They were especially fond of dried fish, which they ate grilled with strong pepper and bread soaked in warm water. (Those were indeed the days of heroic seasonings.) The ladies, went on the Abbe, were very partial to pickles of all sorts, made from fruits and vegetables, without sparing the spices. At dinner the "upper dishes" were generally old and yellow dried stockfish or a cured European ham very yellow and often tainted. Yet these things were eaten although fresh food was served in profusion.

It was in 1798, soon after the First British Occupation, that the first census was organised. White settlement in those days covered an area about two-thirds the size of the present Cape Province, and the census revealed a total of 21,746 Afrikaners. Stellenbosch had 7256 white people, compared with 6261 in Cape Town. The British garrison was

excluded, as the soldiers were regarded as birds of passage.

Dragoons were still stationed at Stellenbosch early last century to protect the town against bandits from the Roggeveld under the notorious leader Afrikander. Barrow, a visitor at that period, described Stellenbosch as a very handsome village of seventy houses. The clergyman, he said, was paid £20 a year, with a house, garden and vineyard free of all rent and taxes. "A popular clergyman is loaded with presents from day to day," Barrow recorded. "Nothing is thought too good for the minister. Game of all kinds, fat lambs, fruit, wine and other good things of this life are continually pouring upon him. His outgoings are chiefly confined to the expense of clothing his family and a little tea and sugar."

Barrow found that provisions were much cheaper in Stellenbosch than in Cape Town, and the people were able to keep their own cattle, sow their own grain and make their own wine. "In a word, they possess the means of

raising within themselves almost all the necessities of life," summed up Barrow.

Lichtenstein described the Stellenbosch fire of December 1803 as a result of a plot among five or six slaves, men and women, who hoped for rich booty. Twenty-four houses and many stores were destroyed, and the damage was estimated at one hundred and fifty thousand Dutch guilders. Some of the incendiaries were burnt to death, others were beheaded.

"Strangers who in the course of their longer voyages make any stay at the Cape seldom fail to visit Stellenbosch," remarked Lichtenstein. "The people of property at Cape Town also, in the fine season of the year, often make parties of pleasure to this fertile spot. Some citizens have fitted up houses for strangers, not inns. They live with the family after their fashion and pay at their departure so much by the day. The general price is three dollars a day (four shillings and sixpence). European wines are extra. An Englishman, Caldwell, and a Hessian, Wolfrum, keep the best houses

of this description. Both are surrounded by agreeable families, with whose society the guests cannot fail to be pleased."

Wrangmore's boarding-house came some years later. An advertisement in the "Cape Town Gazette" stated: "The village of Stellenbosch for the salubrity of its air and the beauty of its rides is peculiarly adapted to the convalescence of invalids injured by a residence in Eastern climes."

Among the personalities of Stellenbosch during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was the Rev. Meent Borchers. He was a pioneer in the field of printing, and author of the lyric song "De Maan", published as a pamphlet, which is now extremely rare and valuable. Borchers was also an historian. In 1798 he built the house which he called La Gratitude, "to give expression to his sense and feeling of gratitude to Almighty God for all His goodness during a long and active life". Borchers Street was named in honour of this fine minister. La Gratitude still stands, the

pride of Dorp Street, oldest street in the town. A broad open stoep was built round the house. It has a pointed pediment as part of the front gable, and below it is the "All-Seeing Eye" which the minister felt was watching over him throughout his life.

There is a Stellenbosch white wine called La Gratitude which I have ordered not only at home but across the seas; and those who shared it not only enjoyed the wine but repeated the inspiring name. They said it was as memorable a name for a wine as you would find in the world.

Borcherds had a son, P. B. Borcherds, who became Cape Town's civil commissioner in the middle of last century. After fifty-six years in the civil service the son wrote a memoir which included many interesting sidelights on old Stellenbosch and other parts of the colony. He gave a happy picture of the parsonage with its orchards of apples, pears, medlars and apricots and quince hedge. His father also had his own beehives, cows, fowls,

pigeons and wine; so that a stipend of seventy-five pounds a year went a long way. Slaves played their *ramkies* round the fire in the evening; instruments with three strings over a calabash.

The day started with early morning coffee. Meat was served at breakfast, and people of French descent took light wines with it. A solid dinner at noon was followed by a gentle siesta. Tea and sweetmeats came at three in the afternoon. Supper was at eight, and last of all came a bedtime snack of coffee, biscuit and fruit.

Mr. John Collison gave a dinner to a large party of wine-growers in Stellenbosch in 1824. He presented cups to Mr. C. J. Briers and Mr. J. M. van Heldsingen "for having greatly improved certain descriptions of wine in the colony". Races were held the following year in the presence of Lord Charles Somerset and his suite, the Turf Club gave a banquet, and the landdrost held a ball. Stellenbosch had a police force, a fire brigade, four schools and a "Society House" or

club. It also had a *tronk* from which nine prisoners escaped. The warder hanged himself.

Rioting broke out in Stellenbosch when it became known that the abolition of slavery was certain to be passed. The slaves became truculent. Slave owners refused to obey a new regulation ordering them to place any punishment of slaves on record at the court house. Officials were assaulted with rotten eggs, and the Protector of Slaves was unable to enforce the law.

Sugar-cane was grown successfully near Stellenbosch at this period. A hurricane in September 1835 blew down some of the oldest and largest oaks and damaged a number of houses. Five years later the "South African Commercial Advertiser" described Stellenbosch as "a rural town of exquisite beauty". There were three hundred and fifty houses, stores, workshops, a water-mill and a distillery. A felt hat factory was opened not long afterwards. Then came an omnibus service to Cape Town twice daily in both directions, the hard road

having brought Stellenbosch within four hours of the capital.

Stellenbosch turned out to watch a "great volunteer review" in stormy October weather a century ago. General Jackson, the lieutenant-governor, disapproved of "amateur soldiering" and refused to lend a single gun for the occasion. Nevertheless, cavalry from as far as Swellendam and Worcester paraded with the Stellenbosch formations.

So many people from Cape Town attended the review that a newspaper remarked: "When the cavalcade had left it looked like a city sacked." After the review seven hundred people sat down to one of those gargantuan Victorian dinners. They ate twenty lambs, fifteen geese, seventeen turkeys, seventy-five fowls, forty ducks, thirty pigeon pies and many large joints of beef, with cakes and confectionery later.

Stellenbosch enjoyed cheap meat at that time, thanks to a Mr. O. J. Truter who formed a league of householders. Lamb cost eight pence

a pound. People in Cape Town, who were paying up to a shilling a pound at the shambles, were so impressed by Mr. Truter's example that they formed a "Cheap Meat Company". Dr. Hammerschmidt, who practised in Stellenbosch in the eighteen-fifties, recorded that the population, men, women and children, were inordinately fond of *lekkers*, and enormous quantities were consumed. Even the beer had to be sweet, as the more wholesome bitter beer was not appreciated.

The town consisted of three hundred and sixty houses, nearly all thatched; five churches, one hotel, ten canteens, two spirit distilleries, three flour mills, a brick and tile company, post office, and a brewery. Five doctors, two apothecaries and one auctioneer lived in town. Two-thirds of the population of two thousand were coloured. "The failings of the coloured people are uncleanness and laziness," wrote the doctor. "They are mostly Malays, with a small number of Hottentots, Mozambiques and Kaffirs."

Remember the trouble at Paarl over Sunday trains? It happened at Stellenbosch, too, though the railway company refused to carry freight on Sundays and pointed out that some people used the train to go to church. Nevertheless, a Stellenbosch orator declared that Sunday trains were an insult to the faith of the inhabitants.

It is strange to find that even after the railway had reached Stellenbosch, a local doctor was fined ten shillings (or six days) for smoking a cigar in the street. They were still terrified of fire, and with good reason. Stellenbosch's greatest fire broke out on the afternoon of January 14, 1875, after some pitch had boiled over and set a shoemaker's cottage alight. Plein Street was soon a sheet of flame. The two small fire engines proved to be almost useless. Cape Town sent a special train with volunteer firemen, three hundred soldiers, fire engines and hundreds of buckets. This expedition reached Stellenbosch at nine that night. The

fire was still spreading, but part of the town was saved.

So the ban on smoking remained in force for some time. King George V visited Stellenbosch in 1881, when he was a midshipman, and he noted in his journal: "A regular Dutch village where the houses were chiefly built of wood. It was destroyed by fire a few years ago, so that smoking in the streets is now forbidden." The royal midshipman erred in his description. The thatch, which still worries many owners of lovely old homes, was responsible; not the timber within the brick walls.

A lesser shock came after the fire, when the Stellenbosch Bank failed. The chairman took strychnine and the cashier was arrested for embezzling twenty thousand pounds. "The cashier," reported a newspaper sadly, "was a most regular attendant at Divine service and was often seen at church three times a day". Another unpleasant affair was the action for libel brought by a minister against a member of

his congregation. The member had alleged that the minister had misbehaved with the principal of a girls' school, but the minister denied the charge and was awarded twenty-five pounds damages and costs.

At the end of October 1885 the first Stellenbosch flower show was held. It was a success. Botanists have since identified more than seven hundred different varieties of seed-bearing wildflowers within four square miles of *vlaktes* outside Stellenbosch. Here, in the early summer, are the red erica and watsonias, the selago and aspalathus. And in midsummer, in the Jonkershoek mountains, there are the ruby-red nerines with their golden bloom; the giant proteas, the rare dwarf tongue fern, and the even rarer blue flower that Dr. Rudolf Marloth discovered beside a waterfall and called "the Cape plant which loves the kloof". Malachite sunbirds visit the red hot pokers. On these heights you may gaze upon relics of a plant world which survive only in a few lonely places.

One more unusual page from a past which is certainly not typical of Stellenbosch. This was the meeting held in the Conservatorium Hall in 1911 by Tennyson Smith, a temperance advocate. "Every wine farmer is a servant of the devil," Smith had declared in a previous address in Cape Town. Now a packed house consisting largely of wine farmers demanded an apology. Smith refused, there was an uproar, and the platform was rushed. A body-guard of teetotal students managed to help Smith out of a side door. He held another meeting later, but wine farmers were excluded.

One open space which Stellenbosch has preserved since the early days is the Braak (the "fallow land"), where the old cavalry manoeuvred. This village green was once known as Adderley Square, and after that as Konigsplein.

Round the Braak are old buildings that have escaped all the fires. Probably the oldest dwelling in the town is the thatched cottage with "leg-of-mutton" gable standing next to

the Burgerhuis. This gabled Burgerhuis bears the date 1797, and it was occupied by coloured families until it was declared an historic monument fairly recently. It is a perfect example of the old Cape-Dutch architecture, built in the H-shape. For many years it stood empty owing to a ghost legend. A slave girl was murdered there by her master. Under a full-moon the victim returns to the scene and walks below the old vine on the stoep.

Stellenbosch and its district have many treasures; great houses that have escaped the fires and misfortunes of the centuries. One house that I remember (in the days of that grand old character Reinier van Eibergen Santhagens) is "Oude Molen". It was a corn mill in the seventeenth century, a place often mentioned in the diary of Adam Tas. Somehow the building survived, remaining aloof among its oaks even when the railway station was built in front of it.

"Santy" transformed it. He was a Hollander born in Batavia and his wife was French; so he filled this mill (which became his home in 1909) with Dutch and French antiques. I recall a passage walled with blue and white Dutch tiles revealing old-fashioned scenes in Holland. A panelled room, full of carved furniture and pewter and Delft ware was designed with the aid of old timber imported from medieval houses demolished in Haarlem. The candelabra came from a Dutch Reformed Church in Paris. As a contrast there is much slender furniture in the Louis XV style. Santhagens also owned the most remarkable collection of armour in South Africa.

You need a fortune to decorate a house in this way. Santhagens had it. Trained as a civil engineer, he became a wine and brandy expert in France. The shrewd Sammy Marks selected him as a technician for the Hatherley distillery near Pretoria; a place where some celebrated imitations were made with varying degrees of success. After the South African War a group

of wine farmers persuaded Santhagens to join them in Stellenbosch.

With his skilled touch the brandy and wines improved considerably, and I still buy and enjoy a light red wine which Santhagens recommended to me nearly thirty years ago. Even now this wine costs only three shillings a quart. Santhagens also sold claret in large jars at low prices to encourage a beer-drinking public to take wine regularly with their meals.

I may tell you that some of those wines from jars, and many low-priced bottled wines, are every bit as palatable as the costly wines advertised in extravagant language.⁹ Indeed, I know one estate selling a wine without merit at the price of imported French wine.

⁹ Mr. P. O. Sauer, an authority for whose views on wine I have a deep respect, declared not long ago that even the finest South African table wines should not cost more than about six shillings a bottle in hotels. He quoted a producer who sold the identical wine in two different bottles - one at half a guinea for wine snobs, and the other at four shillings for those who knew their wine.

Santhagens was a public benefactor in many ways. When he died in 1937 he left every white employee in his firm two hundred pounds; fifty pounds to every coloured worker. His capital of more than one hundred thousand pounds went to various public institutions, and he left "Oude Molen" to the government as a show-place. Remember "Santy" when you gaze on the old mill with the iron anchor over the gable.

Now that I come to think of it, Stellenbosch supplies me with most of my favourite wines. I always have some Muratie Pinot Noir in my cupboard. Muratie farm lies off the main road from Stellenbosch to Paarl, under the Simonsberg. You can see Table Mountain forty miles away from the stoep. Here under the oaks Mr. G. P. Canitz has his cellar and his studio side by side. Can you imagine two more fascinating pursuits than wine-making and painting? The scene of these happy occupations was in use as far back as 1690, when a German named Kamfer laid out the farm which he called Drie Sprongen and planted the first oaks. The present courtyard was his cattle

kraal, stoutly fenced against leopards. Kamfer was a Company's official, and he supplied the ships with meat and vegetables. It was also his duty to fire the signal cannon, and two weather-worn cannon remain on the mountain above Muratie.

Holland lost the Cape, the farm was abandoned, the thatched roof fell in and the whole estate became a ruin. Thus the name Muratie arose; or "murasie" (ruins) in Afrikaans. A son of the Beyers family of "Nooitgedacht" settled there and rebuilt the house. That was often the way with the early settlers of this district; they gave their sons the small mountain farms, and the sons discovered to their delight that they possessed the finest soil.

Riding on horseback in search of landscapes, Canitz discovered Muratie more than thirty years ago. He consulted Professor I. A. Perold, the viticulturist, and was advised to buy the farm. Up to that time Canitz knew wine only as one who recognised a good bottle when he opened it. He had been

impressed by the distinctive flavour of the Muratie wine, and he decided to continue wine making on sound principles under the guidance of Professor Perold.

At first Canitz bottled wine only for his own family and his friends. Then he won first prizes at the Cape Town Wine Show and decided to produce on a commercial scale and send it out with the label of the estate. "Do it with cleanliness - not chemicals." That is the principle Canitz kept before him. Heavy sulphuring gets rid of harmful bacteria, but it also gives the wine drinker a headache.

Canitz's finest growth is a full-bodied red wine in which those little aristocrats, the Pinot grapes, play an important part in the blend. The Pinot is largely used in Burgundy; and even when transplanted to South African soil it still gives the distinctive Burgundy quality and flavour. In Canitz's vineyards, Pinot, Hermitage, Mataro and Cabernet grapes are planted in equal quantities, so that the right

blend is obtained by pressing the grapes together.

A lighter red wine of the claret type also bears the handsome Muratie label. This is a blend of Hermitage and Cabernet. Canitz produces a hock type, using the famous Riesling grape from which the Rhine wines are made. He has cleared the sugar bush from the southern slopes to plant Rieslings in soil which is not too rich. Riesling, French and Stein grapes form the blend for this pleasant dry wine, a wine which once brought a letter of praise from General Hertzog. Oak barrels of the size called "pipes" are found in Mr. Canitz's maturing cellar. The red wines spend at least two years in wood and two in bottle before being placed on the market. White wine is matured for eighteen months in wood and six months in bottle.

Canitz has become a wine expert himself with the passing of the years; but he is grateful to the staff of the Stellenbosch University, who taught him the art of wine making. "I do not

know any other country in the world where the response to a request for help is answered so quickly," declares Canitz. "If I observe a trace of disease in the vineyards a professor arrives the same afternoon to study it. And all this service and advice is free."

Such is Muratie, with its tall palm trees brought from South America more than half a century ago; its "Queen of the Night" cactus in rare bloom on the old homestead; its green vineyards, white cellars and noble red wine. I shall remember it, and the man who has mastered two arts so well, whenever I draw the cork from a bottle of good red Muratie.

CHAPTER 17

HOTTENTOTS-HOLLAND

HOTTENTOTS-HOLLAND is one of the oldest place names in the Cape. It baffled many early travel writers, and some of them gave fantastic explanations. Molsbergen, the Dutch archivist, discovered the true story in the original Van Riebeeck's diary at The Hague.

Five years after Van Riebeeck's landing three adventurous freemen decided to do a little mild exploring without informing the authorities. They slept out for three nights, walking southwards until they found a beautiful river fringed with bitter almond bushes and passing through fertile country. About six hundred Hottentots were living there. They treated the Hollanders kindly, made a *skerm* to protect them from wild animals at night, put up a mat hut and supplied them with fuel. They also bartered two young oxen and three sheep.

"They called this place of exceptionally rich pasturage their Holland or Fatherland, to give our men an idea of the abundance of food and excellent pasturage to be had there," declared the diary.

The real discoverers of this area were four deserters. They made their way there only a few months after Van Riebeeck's arrival in the hope of marching overland to Mozambique and finding a ship to take them home. Jan Blanx, who kept a journal in red chalk, recorded that

they set off with four biscuits, fish, four swords, two pistols and a dog. A rhino charged the party, but they evaded it. The dog chased a porcupine and was wounded by the quills. They ate fresh perlemoen on the False Bay coast and roasted, strung and dried a supply of this shellfish for their journey. However, they all felt weak and hungry after trying to find a way over the mountains, and so they returned to Table Bay - to be flogged for their wicked behaviour.

For twenty years the Liesbeek River formed the frontier of the Dutch colony. Then the Company sent Sergeant Cruythoff to build a cattle kraal and dwelling at Hottentots-Holland and the boundary moved forward. The mountains were covered with timber forests in those days. Men cut the long grass with scythes and loaded wagons with this valuable fodder.

Life on the site of Somerset West was not exactly like farming in Holland. The journal reveals that the cattle station was raided by "beasts of prey, both lions and wolves", which killed a hundred sheep in one night. However,

the enterprise flourished in spite of setbacks, and in 1678 the Company decided to establish a number of "industrious men" in the new district. Jochum Marquaert, the master butcher, was one and Hendrik Elbertz, master husbandman, was another. They were given twelve male and twelve female slaves, forty working oxen, ten cows, seed corn and implements; and they were granted all the land they could cultivate. Each year they had to pay forty slaughter sheep for every hundred ewes, sixty muids of wheat, twenty of rye and twenty of barley. The site of that farm seems to be unknown today. Early in the eighteenth century, however, the farm called Onverwacht ("Unexpected") was started, and though I cannot explain the name I can say that it is a farm with a great tradition.

For this is the farm of the Morkel dynasty. It was in 1718 that the first Morkel settled there, and it has passed down the line from father to son ever since. No other farm in South Africa can show the same record of continuity.

Steenberg, which I have touched on, has been in one family longer, but the daughters inherited it in the distant past. Once I thought the Martin Melcks of Kersefontein on the Berg River held the record, but the Morkels are senior to them by forty years. I believe the second oldest landed family, in which the direct line has retained possession of the original farm, are the Myburghs of Meerlust; and I shall come to them presently.

Onverwacht is always called Die Bos nowadays. Many years ago the English-speaking wife of a Morkel changed the fine old name (for no adequate reason) to "The Bush" and the Afrikaans version remains. The farm has produced wine from its earliest days. A hundred slaves once worked in the vineyards, and it was their custom to serenade the neighbours when the grapes had all been cut. These musical slaves also sang at the homestead every morning.

The homestead is a huge building, but of no great age. Round about the house are older

remnants, including one of the loveliest dove-cotes in the country. Once the wagon track to Caledon passed over the farm and the hospitable Morkels entertained many travellers.

I suppose there are long odds against a farm or any other property passing from father to son for nearly two and a half centuries. The line was almost broken towards the end of last century, when both Morkel sons went down in a gastric fever epidemic and one boy died. However, the Morkels have survived, and another son was born in the great house ten years ago.

It is a coincidence that the Myburghs, as the second oldest farm-owners, should be farming just over the border in the Stellenbosch district, only ten miles from Onverwacht. Philippus Albertus Myburgh arrived with Van Riebeeck, and in 1757 his grandson gained possession of Meerlust. The farm had been granted by Willem Adrian van der Stel to Henning Huysing, and the oldest parts of the *werf* may have been there in Huysing's time.

I believe Myburgh paid the equivalent of three hundred pounds for the place. It was then an enormous farm with grazing rights all the way from the Hottentots-Holland mountains to Wynberg. Unlike Onverwacht, the Meerlust homestead is a genuine antique; possibly the finest of its type in the whole countryside beyond the Cape Peninsula. The wagon house gable carries the date 1660, and some regard it as the oldest building in the *Platteland*. It is hard to fix the exact age of the homestead; but a windowpane, in a living-room, accidentally broken a few years after World War II, bore the inscription Petronella Heydman 1725. She was Huysing's wife. A brandy still that was installed in Huysing's day was still in use twenty years ago. And, of course, there is the famous pigeon house, which was selected as a finer piece of architecture than even the Onverwacht gem, and proclaimed an historical monument some years ago. This old *duiwehok*, built early in the eighteenth century, has miniature gables, modelled with the same artistry as the main gables of the houses.

Sidecourts, once used for cock-fighting, now hear only the wings of the thousand pigeons living in the little house.

A mystery of Meerlust is a design in plaster, embodying two birds, over a door in the slave quarters. It has baffled many historians. Other outbuildings are decorated with symbols which indicate their uses: a tool box over the carpenters' shop, implements over the forge and so on. But the meaning of the two birds has been lost.

Among the heirlooms of Meerlust are a chair carved by a slave from a wild olive tree; a massive lock, now fitted to a cellar, which washed on shore with wreckage from the Birkenhead; and the original, enormous oven for baking a hundred loaves at a time.

Samuel Fairfax, a young English visitor at the time of the First British Occupation, kept a diary of a journey to Hottentots-Holland. He was entertained at Meerlust, and found the supper table loaded with dishes. "I ate of the

finest ham I ever tasted, for the pig had been fed on peaches," Fairfax remarked. "The wine was the best I tasted at the Cape, Mynheer Myburgh told me that in the fruit season he goes out in his nightgown and breakfasts on the best of the fruit. They feed the hogs on what they don't use. They won't pay the carriage to the Cape, twenty-five miles."

Fairfax declared that Myburgh was a stout, good-looking man, intelligent and sensible and a good farmer. Everything in his house and grounds was in a superior style.

Lichtenstein, Lady Anne Barnard, General Janssens, Burchell - all these and many more slept under the Meerlust thatch. Little did they know that the Myburghs would still be in possession of the farm a century and a half later.

Meerlust produced some of the finest wheat in the world last century. A sack of this wheat, sent to the international contest at Philadelphia eighty years ago, was awarded first prize.

Canada and Russia were among the defeated nations. A relic of the grain-farming days is the large threshing-floor. The only serious loss at Meerlust, I should say, is the row of trees which once shaded the front of the noble homestead.

Somerset West village was helped into being by Mr. H. Alexander, colonial secretary in 1816. He cut up his estate of three thousand morgen into plots from one morgen upwards. Alexander offered to build small houses for tradesmen, as he wished to encourage that class of settler. His notice in the "Government Gazette" pointed out: "As the estate is on the great thoroughfare over the kloof to the interior it gives a fair prospect of being a place of considerable trade."

Plots were sold round the site of the projected Dutch Reformed Church the following year, and Lord Charles Somerset announced that the village would be called Somerset. Within fifteen years a visiting Wesleyan minister

wrote: "Somerset is of considerable size. In the district there are about forty Christian families, and the slave population amounts to about eight hundred."

Wesleyans under the Rev. Barnabas Shaw opened a chapel and school for the coloured and slave population at that period. Shaw recorded: "The Dutch minister and his lady both attended the service, and I lodged with them. He is very anxious that I should preach there regularly. This is rather a new thing in our part of Africa."

Almost a century ago a Mr. Roos started an omnibus service between Cape Town and Somerset West, and the "Cape Argus" sent a reporter along. (In the same way, working for the same newspaper, I travelled to various Western Province towns in the first aeroplane.) That unknown and forgotten reporter described Somerset West as a pretty little village of white-washed houses with ten or twenty farms scattered about the district.

Mr. Drake's hotel was better than most in the colony. (This is always an important point with reporters, who like to be entertained royally; if they are not, they entertain themselves liberally and put it down on their expense sheets.) This hard-working reporter, having refreshed himself, hired a horse and rode up Sir Lowry's Pass to look down on the farms.

He noted that several thousand acres of land remained untouched by the hand of man along the river. The best farm was Mr. M. J. Theunissen's property Vergelegen, with a larger and more complete house than was usual among colonial homesteads. Theunissen informed the reporter that he had paid £3125 for the farm in 1821. It then yielded thirty-five leaguers of wine, and he had brought the output up to two hundred leaguers. Every labourer had a cottage with his own ground for mealies and fruit trees.

"Everything that is wanted is supplied by the ground," said the reporter. "Sugar and tea are

the only things from the village. Bread is baked at home. Meat is slaughtered on the farm. Beef, pork, butter, bacon and hams are laid in. The farm also produces, potatoes, cabbages, beans, peas, beetroot, fruits and liquors, wheat, barley and Indian corn - all the staple articles of food. Vergelegen is a place of regularity, industry and comfort."

Yes, I have gone out thankfully from the "Cape Argus" office into the platteland and discovered farms like that myself. But not by horse-drawn omnibus. And not as close to the city as Somerset West.

Somerset West saw many wagons going to and from Sir Lowry's Pass, but the village did not grow fast after the middle of last century. For a long time there was just the hotel, three shops and an establishment where the chemist acted as doctor. Farmers had to bank their money in Cape Town, or under the bed in the old wagon-box. Only in 1889 did the railway reach the village. Mr. Alexander's vision of "considerable trade" did not become a reality

until early this century, when the dynamite factory was built. And then the residents opposed it. Stories were told of chemicals from the factory contaminating the sea and killing off the fish. Many people lived in fear of explosions and signed a petition asking the government to prohibit the new enterprise. Not long afterwards some of those very people, and their children, found work at the dynamite factory.

Continuity is the keynote of this old district, and not only on the farms. Two ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church served the congregation there for a record period. It was in 1848 that the Rev. J. F. Reitz took his family to the old Pastorie; and he was succeeded in 1891 by the Rev. P. J. Pienaar, who remained there for forty-five years. So the two ministers completed eighty-eight years between them. In the first one hundred and seventeen years of this church there were only four ministers. Incidentally the seven great "Rugby Pienaars" were all sons of the minister.

Anglican worshippers first used an old coachhouse, which the Rev. Frederick Carlyon, Rector of Stellenbosch, opened more than a century ago. Cecil Rhodes and others subscribed towards a small permanent church which was opened early this century by the Archbishop of Cape Town. But the Archbishop declared that the church would not be consecrated until it had been proved that the attendance was large enough to justify a consecrated church. Someone recalled this fact half a century later, when a new All Saints Church was being built. One old lady was deeply shocked. "Does that mean that couples were never properly married there?" she inquired anxiously.

Somerset West has revived, in fairly recent years, a phase of life at the Cape which belonged to Wynberg and other Peninsula suburbs last century. I refer to the colony of retired English people it has attracted from India and other countries East of Suez. Long ago these civil servants and others were nicknamed

"Hindoos"; and they passed to a year at a time at the Cape, spending liberally while they recovered their health. The modern colony at Somerset West includes not only pensioners from the East but many regular soldiers and naval officers on the retired list. They visit England when they can afford it, and return gratefully to the land where it is still fairly easy to find someone else to cook and wash up. A list of owners of small holdings in the district looks like a page from Debrett. "Surrey of South Africa" was once Somerset West's nickname, and "Little London" came later.

CHAPTER 18

GROENLAND AND CALEDON

Undoubtedly the most eccentric Western Province farmer I ever met, and the most successful, was the late Mr. Edward Molteno. In the fruit-growing world the "Molteno brothers of Elgin" have become a legend. The gentle Henry Molteno did his share of the hard work, but everyone knows that the fabulous "Uncle Ted" ruled the Elgin kingdom of five thousand acres and a thousand workers.

"Uncle Ted" could be a terror, but he had some great ideas. Like many great ideas, they were simple. Let us survey the scene before this Henry Ford of fruit-growing appeared there.

You know Elgin, of course. Elgin is really only the railway station, and the village is Grabouw;¹⁰ but most people insist on calling the place Elgin. It lies in an amphitheatre of mountains between Sir Lowry's Pass and Caledon known to the older people as the Groenland; and the clay soil, winter rain and cool summers combine to allow the Elgin farmers to produce half South Africa's export apples. That means about eight thousand tons of apples a year. Elgin fruit farmers do not need to visit California to see what other people are doing. They know that their yield per acre is as good or better than California.

¹⁰ Grabouw was named by Langschmidt the painter, who came from Grabou in Germany. The "w" was added by some meddler who thought the name looked incomplete without it. Langschmidt owned the farm Gustrow which ran from Grabouw to the Hermanus coast.

Early this century Elgin was regarded as potato country, and you might keep pigs as a sideline. Bluegums were grown by the forestry department for railway sleepers. But no one was predicting that Elgin would become one of the richest districts in the Union, and a flourishing fruit-growing area. Fruit at that time meant pears and peaches for the local markets. An old-fashioned apple called Wemmer's Hoek was the favourite, but the quality was poor and it was overshadowed by other fruits. In the whole Western Province there were two jam and canning factories. Even the farmers preferred to buy fruit canned in California, at two shillings for a two-pound tin.

Pioneer apple-grower of Elgin was Dr. A. G. Viljoen, district surgeon of Caledon late last century. He planted an orchard with many varieties of apples and demonstrated that the area was suitable. But others hesitated for a long time before they invested in orchards which gave no return for seven or eight years. They knew it would mean fencing, to keep the

buck and hares out. (I shot a *grysbok* not so long ago in one of the Molteno orchards.) And in due course would come the expense of packing sheds and cold stores.

Meanwhile the Molteno brothers (sons of Sir John Molteno, first prime minister of the Cape Colony) were studying chemistry at Cambridge. Edward took the Natural Science Tripos in 1899; and after travelling widely he returned to the Cape and started mixed farming in the Elgin district in 1903 with his brother Henry as partner. They bred pigs at first, like the other Groenland farmers, and inevitably they found themselves waging a campaign against the pork buyers. The Moltenos wanted a fair price for baconers, and they were not getting it.

Probably it was this situation which influenced the Moltenos when they took up fruit-growing on a large scale. They were not pioneers and their cold-storage plant was not the first in the country by a long way. (Remember Fred Struben in the Hex River Valley.) But when

the brothers bought the group of farms called Glen Elgin and went into action, they showed everyone else how to make a struggling industry prosperous.

It was in 1927 that the Moltenos decided to concentrate on fruit. Within ten years they had become the largest individual exporters of South African peaches and nectarines. During one year Glen Elgin contributed a quarter of all the deciduous fruit exported. During that first decade, the enterprise increased its turnover five-fold, with total returns of a quarter of a million pounds. The names of the Molteno brothers were stamped on fruit labels by the million. This was indeed a success story on the American scale. California might well have sent students to Elgin to learn the secret.

I walked round that famous place with "Uncle Ted" not long before World War II and heard the story. (After the war I used to walk up and down the hillsides with his nephew John Molteno picking off the guinea-fowl, and a more exhausting yet satisfying form of

shooting I have never known.) "Uncle Ted" showed me the packing sheds and engine rooms, like huge factories; and then he turned to the human side of the undertaking.

"I believe in making every farm worker contented," Edward Molteno began. "He must have a reasonably comfortable house free of charge, and ground where he can grow his own potatoes, beans and other vegetables and keep his own poultry. Fruit is supplied free all through the year. Butter and milk can be bought at a fraction of the town prices. With these advantages the country worker will tolerate long hours and do without the expensive entertainments which have become necessary in the cities."

Coffee was being served free of charge to all the employees as I went round the farm. The Moltenos disliked the "tot system" and declared that if wine was given at all it should first be examined. "Bad wine makes a man morose," pointed out Edward Molteno. "Where the demand for effort is continuous it is

hopeless to attempt to stimulate a man with wine. I wish clocks had never been invented. On a farm a job is a job and it must be completed regardless of overtime. The farm worker can rest when time is not valuable. All our people understand that point of view, so different from the city outlook. If the work is urgent they will work all night. We do everything for ourselves here, put up our own buildings and maintain our own machinery."

"Uncle Ted" liked to expand on the difference between the town and country outlook. General Hertzog once told him: "The basis of country life is happiness - give a man happiness and he will live on what the townsman considers a starvation wage." That was "Uncle Ted's" philosophy, too.

"In town, everything is put on the basis of an exchange value, and a man will part with anything if you offer him the market price, or a shade more," declared Edward Molteno. "But in the country a man who owns a good horse or a good farm cannot be induced to sell."

"Uncle Ted" loved the technicalities of cold storage, and few men in the country understood those problems better. He and his brother, and their consulting engineer, Mr. E. A. Griffiths, carried out a vast amount of independent research in the field of precooling of fruit. Once they had fifteen hundred trays of ripe fruit rejected for export. They sent it to cold storage for the period of the voyage from Cape Town to England. Then they invited the government experts to inspect it. The whole consignment was in excellent condition, and it was still in good condition after a further ten days' exposure to the South African summer climate.

As a result of triumphs of this sort, the Molteno brothers were regarded by Department of Agriculture officials as the bogey-men of the industry. All too often the Moltenos proved that they were right.

And how powerfully "Uncle Ted" expressed himself. He did not suffer fools gladly, and the government "expert" who dared to argue with

this demon from Elgin was trounced the moment he revealed his ignorance. In the department which dealt most frequently with the Elgin fruit growers there was one warning which was often heard, and which struck a chill into many hearts: "The Moltenos are coming! "

Within living memory Caledon belonged to the *agterwereld*. It was a poor relation of the other Western Province districts, an area without a railway, still in the Cape cart and wagon age.

"Kale Donners," as some were pleased to call the Caledon folk, were regarded as much less sophisticated than the well-educated and more prosperous Boland people. But the rough young men of Caledon had a suitable nickname ready for their critics from the wine districts. "*Rosyntjietone*", they would shout, a cunning reference to the old-fashioned method of pressing the grapes with bare feet.

Caledon had indeed to wait a long time for the railway in comparison with other Western Province districts. The line reached Caledon in 1902 and stopped dead in 1915 at a spot with the ominous name of Protein. Farmers hoped it would be a temporary halt. They were wrong. Protein is still the terminus, which proves that it takes more than a name to stir up the railway builders.

I think it was the advance of wheat farming in the Ruggens, the ridge veld round Caledon, that raised the district from its old isolation. It was cattle country in Willem Adrian van der Stel's time. This Governor's own cattle grazed all the way to the Zwartberg slopes where Caledon now stands. As early as 1710 the Council of Policy granted land so that a small house could be built at the mineral springs for the convenience of visitors. But a full century passed before the old name of Zwartberg was abolished and Caledon village was proclaimed.

Campbell the missionary passed through Caledon on the day the first Dutch Reformed Church was

opened. Forty wagons had gathered round the new building with its lovely gable. (It was pulled down a few years ago.) Mr. Vos preached, and nearly four hundred rix-dollars were collected at the service. The church and minister's house cost six thousand pounds, a formidable bill for a small congregation to meet in those days.

Latrobe, another minister of religion, visited Caledon shortly afterwards. "It is but a sapling rising out of the ground," he wrote. "The houses are neat and the church is in the form of a cross without a steeple. Dr. Hassner is the proprietor of the baths." Caledon's only monument to the past, I think, is the gravestone, in the shape of a pyramid, set up at the springs in memory of Dr. Hassner and his family. Some years ago, however, there was a well-preserved house under thatch with the date 1817 on the gable.

Caledon had an English school in the 'thirties of last century. A prize-list of the period includes the names of Georgiana Honey, Esther le Roux, Sarah Huddleston, Elizabeth Marais, Charlotte Knox, Hendrik Jordaan, George Scott Darby and

Daniel le Roux. An agricultural society was formed before the middle of last century. Members raised a fund so that rewards could be paid for the destruction of vermin. Hyenas were feared more than any other raider, and the society paid three pounds for each full-grown hyena. A leopard fetched only two pounds and a jackal six shillings.

Horse-breeding was well-established at this time. Some years later Lady Duff Gordon described the Cape horses of the district as "valiant little beasts who, ungroomed, half-fed, seldom stabled, and having nothing but a roll in the dust to refresh themselves with, will carry a six and a half foot rider sixty miles a day, day after day, at a shuffling easy canter six miles an hour".

Bishop Gray travelled to Caledon by wagon, passing very few houses at which English labourers were not employed. This was in 1848, but little ground had been cultivated. He also saw, for the first time in his life, a man riding an ox. Caledon, he thought, resembled an English moor, with hardly a tree to be seen. There was no inn.

However, the bishop found many English people in the neighbourhood and selected a site for a church.

In the district. Bishop Gray visited an English farmer who had several English families with him. They had no church or clergyman of their own within one hundred miles. The bishop visited an English girl of twelve who was lying in bed, apparently dying. "She did not pray and said she could not; she knew not what prayer was, nor could she read," Bishop Gray declared. "Poor child! We all knelt down and prayed for her."

Caledon's first hotel was opened almost a century ago. Soon afterwards came the "Grand Western Province Agricultural Exhibition", with two pages of speeches in the "Cape Argus". However, there were dull patches. In 1866, for example, the Caledon correspondent of the "Cape Standard" reported: "The brass band is dead and the instruments sent out from England might just as well be sold. The library is in a

lingering state. On the other hand the Archery Club has weekly meetings."

Prince Alfred's visit put new life into the village four years later. One of the royal tour correspondents noted that Caledon had three churches, two ministers, five schools, three doctors, three law agents, one bank, two moneylenders, six hotels and boarding-houses, thirteen shopkeepers and one photographer.

When I first went to Caledon there were a number of old people who remembered the "great fire" of 1873 - two years before the "great fire" of Wellington which I described earlier. Caledon lost thirteen houses in one night. The Caledon fire should have served as an example, but Wellington and Stellenbosch were both unprepared when their turn came.

It was considered a sign of extremely hard times in Caledon in 1885 when a white man was imprisoned for debt. That had never happened before. Shopkeepers and others were giving up

their businesses and migrating to the diamond fields.

Old residents of Caledon are firm in their belief that the first wildflower show in the Cape was held in Caledon. I hate to contradict them, but you may remember that a special train ran to the Tulbagh wildflower show in 1891, and Caledon's first show was held in September the following year.

Pioneers of the Caledon show were Messrs. Alf Devine, Gawie le Roux and Miss Hope McLeroth. They gambled on drawing a crowd, hired the shed where *sewejaartjie*¹¹ flowers were dried for trade purposes, and offered £100 in prizes. Little did the competitors realise that the three promoters had only about a hundred shillings between them. However, the Worcester brass band was engaged. The shed

¹¹ A description of the old export trade in *Sewejaartjies* (everlasting flowers) appears in my previous book "In the Land of Afternoon". I believe there is one dealer in Napier who still buys the flowers to fill mattresses for babies. Such a mattress is soft and keeps an even temperature.

was filled with exhibits, including more than three hundred varieties of wildflowers collected by one competitor, Miss Fick. People took the train from Cape Town to Sir Lowry's Pass and completed the journey by Cape cart. When it was all over the three pioneers found they had made a net profit of sixty-six pounds. How different it might have been!

My friend Denis Woods, mountaineer and no mean botanist, places Caledon at the head of the list as a spring wildflower district. Caledon has the rarest and choicest wildflowers; nearly all the most exquisite heaths; the coral-red pincushion protea, the Marsh Rose and other proteas on the verge of extinction. And where else (asks Denis) will you see the celebrated Caledon bluebell? This is not so common as it should be owing to reckless picking along the roads. The bell of this gladiolus is not always blue; it may be deep lilac, with dots and streaks of darker purple inside.

Rarest of all the growths peculiar to this district, I should say, is the jasmine heath. This was discovered at the end of last century - a shrub with clusters of white flowers tinged with rose. Collectors from Kirstenbosch searched the Caledon veld and the mountains again and again for this elusive plant with the bloom like jasmine; but every expedition failed to locate it. Sixty years after the discovery a woman botanist from England chanced upon it while looking for something else. It grows wild, as far as the botanists know, in only one spot. Five people know how to locate it; but they will not reveal the secret for fear of vandals exterminating the last wild plant.

Jasmine heath has been grown successfully in the Caledon Wild Flower Garden. This fine local enterprise was started by a brilliant itinerant landscape gardener named Cecil Young. He wandered into Caledon in 1933, at a time when the horticultural society was planning a wildflower garden. Young got the job, pitched a tent in the kloof, and laid the

foundation of the present magnificent array of vygies and daisies, heaths and proteas. Some months later he wandered off again. Mr. de Wet Meiring completed the garden which now draws three thousand people on a fine Sunday in the spring.

Stories of cures at the Caledon mineral spring come down to us from the early days of the seventeenth century. Commissary Croll, who had been suffering from asthma in java, went there on horseback accompanied by Pieter Robbertsz, a Stellenbosch burgher, and his ailing sister. Their horses were attacked by leopards on the way, but they escaped.

They were greeted at the spring by five white men from Cape Town who had been there for a fortnight. One declared that he had ridded himself of his palsy; the others had shaken off their rheumatism. Croll reported later that he developed a keen appetite, and that his cough left him within ten days.

Caledon, most famous of the Cape spas, is a chalybeate spring, which means that iron predominates in the waters. Hot chalybeate springs are rare, but at Caledon the water comes up at 180 degrees Fahrenheit, and at the rate of nearly two hundred thousand gallons a day.

Professor P. D. Hahn regarded Caledon as the most valuable mineral spring in South Africa. The water is clear, odourless and not unpleasant when swallowed, in spite of the iron tang. Chalybeate waters are recommended for anaemia, certain forms of malaria, rheumatism, gout, neuralgia, sciatica, hysteria and skin diseases. Samples of Caledon water were entered in a mineral spring contest open to the whole world at the Chicago World's Fair in the 'nineties of last century, and were awarded first prize for mineral and curative properties.

That dramatic cures have occurred at Caledon there is no doubt. Dr. Daniell, medical superintendent there at the end of last century,

described the most remarkable cure he had ever seen. A colonel arrived from India so completely crippled that for two years he had been carried everywhere and fed like a baby. Within six weeks the colonel was riding on horseback and striding over the Caledon hills with a gun.

I cannot leave Caledon without mentioning the onions, less romantic than wildflowers but not to be ignored. Caledon district grows more onions, finer onions, than any other district in South Africa. As you pass by the Bot River, or the streams of Villiersdorp, you will see the vivid green of the onions against the grey veld.

Hundreds of families live mainly on the income from onions. It is essentially a crop for smallholders. Poor, sour soil can be used, no heavy fertilisers are necessary, and a small piece of land will produce hundreds of bags. Expensive machinery plays no part in this business. A large family is more useful than a tractor. And indeed not only men and women work in the onion fields. In the harvesting

season you may observe the lorries waiting for the mission school at Villiersdorp to close in the afternoon. The children can earn, too, binding the onions into strings.

Yes, there are times when you might identify the Caledon district blindfolded; when the flowers are out, when the fruit is ripe, and when the onions are drying in the sheds.

CHAPTER 19

MUSCADEL COUNTRY

After the onions you may welcome the aroma of wine again. A rich dessert wine. You are now in the *Muskadelstreek*, the muscadel country round Montagu and Robertson. Muscadel is a wine which may be compared with the great sweet wines of the world. You may not like sweet wine, of course, but the fact remains that it was a muscadel wine that made Constantia famous last century. Some say that a little muscadel makes a better night-cap than whisky. I do not drink after dinner, but you may like to try this harmless prescription.

Montagu, on the edge of the Little Karoo, was no more than a cattle run a hundred years ago. Swellendam farmers had discovered that the grazing was sometimes good, and maintained cattle posts there. Not many farm title deeds in the district go back earlier than 1825, though a foundation stone dated 1800 was found on Derdeheuvel.



"Montagu, on the edge of the Little Karoo, was no more than a cattle run a hundred years ago."

Unlike so many other Cape villages, Montagu was not started by the church. It was due to the enterprise of a farmer named Swanepoel, who cut up a part of his farm Uitvlugt and sold irrigated plots to his friends in Worcester, Wellington and other places. Some liked Montagu because of the mineral springs; others found the winter climate favourable. Montagu stands in a bowl of the Langeberg, sheltered by the mountains. Seldom does it rain for two days in succession. For half a century, indeed, water was a serious problem in Montagu, and the place became known as "the only town in the world which has more wine than water".

Sir John Montagu, colonial secretary, visited Montagu in 1851 to name the place, and a banquet was held in his honour. After the cheers had died away, however, the new residents discovered certain hardships. The only outlet to the west was Cogman's Kloof, with a river which had to be crossed eight times. Many carts and wagons were stuck there. Then the nearest bank was at Swellendam, which meant a journey over

the mountains. Nevertheless, the village had one hundred and sixty well-built houses and a population of a thousand only nine years after the sale of plots.

Drought areas in South Africa have a way of suffering from disastrous floods, and so it was with Montagu. In March 1867 the Keysie river came down in flood, drowning one Englishman and twelve coloured people, and sweeping many vineyards away. A higher flood occurred in May the same year. No lives were lost, but Cogman's Kloof was rendered impassable for some time and the toll house was carried away. The toll-keeper with his wife and child had narrow escapes, for they had taken refuge in a cart which floated. It was attached to a tree by a rope, and if the rope had parted they would have gone downstream in the darkness. (It was on this occasion that the Breede River rose sixty feet near Swellendam.) A proper road was built through Cogman's Kloof ten years later, with a tunnel named Bain's Tunnel.

Anthony Trollope, the English novelist, visited Montagu at that period. "The Montagu brandy, I was assured, was equal to that of Oudtshoorn and must surpass that of Robertson," wrote Trollope. "I tested them all and declare them to be equally villainous." However, he enjoyed the journey and found Montagu Pass "equal to some of the mountain roads through the Pyrenees".

Three men who will never be forgotten in Montagu were the Rev. Servaas Hofmeyr, the first minister (appointed in 1860); Mr. J. G. Euvrard, the schoolmaster; and Dr. J. W. Castles. Old residents will tell you that these three legendary figures "made the town". They were great friends, and helped one another in many ways. Euvrard assisted Castles at operations and acted as medical adviser when Castles was absent. Hofmeyr was also a skilful amateur doctor, and while on *huisbesoek* he extracted many a tooth. The versatile Euvrard conducted church services in the absence of the minister.

Among the heirlooms of a Montagu family is a chair on which President Kruger sat when he passed through the village in 1880 on his way to the Transvaal. President Kruger and General Joubert were entertained by the leading citizens, and Mrs. Lettie Burger took charge of the enormous lunch of beef, mutton, pork, chicken, duck and turkey. That was one of the days when the Montagu cannon was fired.

Montagu has a pastorie with three gables and seventeen rooms, a mansion which looks like a miniature Groote Schuur. (It was built during the ostrich feather boom.) Just over half a century ago a young Dutch Reformed Church minister named Malan arrived there fresh from his university in Holland. He was a bachelor, so his mother kept house for him. Old people remember his quiet but devastating sermons on the evils of drink, preached to a congregation of wine farmers. Montagu has a wine festival nowadays, so that the words of the young minister must have fallen on stony ground. However, he was more

successful in politics, for he became prime minister.

Montagu is the leading Cape radio-active spring in the "indifferent waters" class, the counterpart of Karlsbad and Baden-Baden. The gas that bubbles up consists of oxygen, nitrogen and carbon-dioxide. The spring was on Swanepoel's farm, but it was sold a century ago and has been exploited by private individuals and companies ever since then.

Cogman's Kloof (named after a Hottentot chief) has a grim legend. It is similar to the famous Paarl Rock story, but more details are given by those who believe in it. The legend was written down by Mrs. H. M. Evans of Potchefstroom (formerly Miss Joubert of Montagu) just as her father related it to her. He had heard it from his father, who was born early last century. Thus the affair happened a long time ago, if indeed there is a word of truth in it.

According to the legend a Frenchman named De Pascqval or Paskowaal once lived in the kloof. There were enormous vertical cracks in the rock far above his dwelling. Two of Paskowaal's sons went out after wild honey, and at one place they had to jump over a crack. The eldest son, hampered by a sack of honey on his back, fell into the crack. His brother brought many helpers with ropes to the spot, but it was impossible to reach the injured man far down in the crack. Paskowaal then shot his son to put him out of his misery. One can only hope that the legend was invented to fit the cracks in the rock, and that no human beings ever faced such an ordeal.

I can clear up the mystery of Hortjiesbrug, the bridge at the Cogman's Kloof entrance on the Ashton side. People often argue about place-names and Hortjiesbrug has baffled many debaters. Some said that because the bridge is shaped like a horseshoe the original name was Horsehoe Bridge, and this had

become corrupted. In fact, it is a corruption of the name Hodges. He was a magistrate, and chairman of the commission which recommended the bridge and the road through the kloof long ago. It is time that Mr. Hodges received his due.

In the wild and lonely mountains round Montagu are old, abandoned farms with their thatched roofs falling in, derelict kraals and traces of the old track once used by wagons bound for the Great Karoo. Here a fugitive might hide for weeks before the man-hunters cornered him, a fact which has been proved on more than one occasion.

For many years an elderly white hermit named Piet Muller lived in a stone hut in the Waboomberg twenty-five miles from Montagu. Muller was a first-class rifle shot, and he killed buck when he could find them. His normal diet consisted of goats' meat, goats' milk, and *heuningbier*, a strong brew of honey and water. He owned eight hundred morgen, where his goats grazed. Seldom did he come down from the heights. When he did, he sold the skins of jackals

and lynxes which he had shot. He stated that he did not believe in banks, and everyone knew that he kept his cash in his hut. This money included a few Kruger sovereigns. It was believed that he had hidden his will under a stone in a deep kloof in the mountains; but no one understood how his heirs were expected to find it. Like many hermits, Muller was not completely normal.

In the middle of August 1953, Muller called on his neighbours some miles away and left them at night. A few days later these people noticed that Muller's goats were not being kraaled at night, and then they discovered that Muller was missing. Their suspicions were thoroughly aroused when they found that his hut had been burgled.

At first the police were unwilling to accept the theory that Muller had been murdered, for they knew that the hermit often wandered off by himself. Almost a month passed before the police took the matter seriously and identified the charred remains of poor Piet Muller in the fireplace of the mountain hut. Soon afterwards a

coloured man was arrested and convicted of the murder.

This tragedy reminded many people in Montagu of another, even more dramatic affair in which a desperate character named Jan Erasmus (nicknamed Koos Sas) was the criminal. Erasmus had a number of convictions for theft and he had escaped from gaol several times. In 1917 he murdered Danie Botha, son of a Stellenbosch minister, in a store in the Montagu district. The death sentence was passed, and then the news went round the district that Erasmus had escaped from the local gaol again.

Police and farmers searched the mountains. Isolated farmers were worried, for they knew that Erasmus had stolen a gun and that they would have to fight for their lives if the murderer visited them in search of food. The hunt went on for weeks, but Erasmus was too clever for the police. Somewhere in the remote mountains the murderer had a hiding-place which no one could find.

Every police-station in South Africa was supplied with portraits and descriptions of Erasmus. Months passed, and at last the police received information that Erasmus had made his way to Namaqualand, where he was working for a farmer named Dixon. The police surrounded Dixon's farm, but the wily Erasmus slipped through the cordon. However, the murderer found that it was more difficult to hide in Namaqualand than in the Montagu mountains. The police found him at last, and he was shot dead while attempting to escape.

Robertson came into being two or three years after Montagu, but in the conventional manner. The church bought Mr. Hans van Zyl's farm, which bore the impressive name of "Het Roode Zand aan de Hoops Rivier in het Land van Waaferen". That was much too long, so they called the new village Robertson after Dr. William Robertson, minister of the Dutch Reformed Church at Swellendam.

Swellendam farmers were already grazing their cattle in the area, just as they did at Montagu.

When it was discovered that the soil was suitable for vines, the village was born.

The farm "Het Roode Zand" cost £4200, and the auctioneer who sold the plots was the redoubtable Mr. Joseph Barry of Swellendam. He and his nephews owned ships, shops and farms; especially shops. At one time he issued his own paper money. "*As jy lekker wil lewe, koop by Barry en Newele,*" was the slogan of a century ago, as good as many a modern effort. Barry followed the church into every new village and opened the first shop. He was the business pioneer at Robertson, and his descendants are still there four generations later.

Robertson soon became a wagon-building village. It was Fauche and his daughter (an unusual combination in this trade) who made President Kruger's coach, now in the Pretoria museum. During the boom years it was said that half the village was making wagons while the other half was away on *togry*, selling the wagons in the republics. Sometimes a cavalcade of twenty wagons would leave Robertson and

travel in company. These wagons would be loaded with wine and brandy, almonds and raisins, vinegar, moskonfyt and dried fruit. Clever carpenters in the village, Preiss and Koos van Zyl and others, also made stinkwood furniture of the sort that collectors are glad to find nowadays.

They believed in bilingualism at Robertson as far back as 1854. The children were attending a school at which Nederlands was the only medium, and naturally they spoke Afrikaans at home. So the parents wrote to Glasgow for a teacher, and the appeal was answered by Alexander Clarke. His salary was seventy pounds a year. This strict but popular man learnt Dutch quickly, used his cane freely and gained a great reputation as a teacher. He had been in the village for two years when he swallowed his dental plate at a meal. Heroic methods were used in the effort to recover it. They tried to hook it out with wire, and when that failed they pushed it farther down his throat with his own cane. Meanwhile a,

volunteer had galloped to Worcester for the doctor. When the doctor arrived fifteen hours later Clarke was dead.

This new village without a doctor lived in great fear of measles. When outbreaks were reported in other villages, Robertson posted sentries to keep strangers out. One week-end in September 1860, however, a girl named Sophie Erasmus came in from one of the farms in the district with her father to attend church. She was not feeling well, but she was in love. Her young man took her to church next day, and before her illness had been diagnosed, Sophie had infected about seventy people with measles.

It was the custom in those days to treat measles with a revolting concoction which included *kraalmis*. The local midwife was a great believer in this appalling drink of farmyard manure. She mixed it carefully herself and went from house to house administering the potions of death. For this so-called cure for measles contained of germs of typhoid fever.

In this first Robertson typhoid epidemic, one hundred white people were affected and sixty died. The very last victim was the minister, the Rev. C. H. de Smidt, who had weakened his resistance by working himself almost to death, attending the others. Among the coloured people the death rate was frightening.

It was a drought year, and the typhoid epidemic caused so much additional distress that the government had to open a soup kitchen. Other villages sent wagonloads of food. Typhoid returned almost every summer, however, and Robertson gained the ominous nickname of "Koorsdorp". A serious outbreak occurred in the summer of 1896-97, due once more to polluted water. Soon afterwards the situation was saved by the piping of water from the Langeberg to the village. During the water famines, water was so precious that every householder took his pump-handle to bed with him for fear of thieves.

For some years Robertson was the headquarters of a private railway, the New Cape Central,

running from Worcester to Mossel Bay. It seems that the old Cape Government Railways neglected this route during the period when the diamond and gold rushes kept the attention of transport chiefs fixed on the north.

So in the 'eighties of last century a private company secured authority to build the line through Robertson to the sea. The company had a capital of a million pounds, and the line was constructed by a London syndicate. Government rolling stock was used. It was a queer business, and it lasted until 1925, when the South African Railways took over the whole enterprise, paying over a million pounds for the assets. Some of the passengers used to say that N.C.C.R. stood for "nothing can come right".

CHAPTER 20

LAST PONT, LOST BLUE-BUCK

Swellendam is another of those Western Province districts which has isolated stretches and little-known corners. Old fashioned ways are more likely to survive in such places than

they are along a national road. Swellendam's forgotten world is the *strandveld*, the dune country down towards the sea.

This is the land of the *duineboere*, tenant farmers who must struggle hard to make a living by cutting firewood and growing a little rye, oats or barley in the clearings known as *komme* among the dunes. Yet the unspoilt people love their *agterwêreld*, for there are compensations. It is a land of partridges and hares, vaal ribbok and duiker. On the vleis are wild geese, the wild duck called *geelbek*, and flamingo's. Honey is the finest in the Cape after the bees have looted the vast array of spring flowers.

The late Dr. John Muir, medical man and naturalist, knew this *strandveld* intimately. He pointed out that contrary to expectations, it was not a windswept waste but pleasant and beautiful country. Dr. Muir used to search the beaches for foreign seeds cast on shore by the currents; and for a long time he was puzzled when he found some of the foreign growths far

inland. One of the *duineboere* solved the mystery for him. "It's the field mice, doctor," this man pointed out. "They pick them up on the beaches and carry them to their nests for their young."

Muir found many rare plants in the *strandveld*. Only then will you find the lovely *Erica Mariae* and other heaths, though certain erica varieties are abundant. Muir declared that the lime stone ridges formed a treasure house of new and little-known species. A protea species which Muir discovered there now bears his name. The area is also the home of the rare *Protea obtusifolii*. Unfortunately the farmers of this stretch are not botanists, and Muir found them burning lime and using rare proteas as fuel.

Riding in the *strandveld* can be dangerous, for a mole-rat as large as a rabbit leaves its little pitfalls everywhere. In the early morning the horseman may be soaked with dew as he brushes past the *dekriet* seven feet high, the

reed used for thatching; or the *olifantsriet* which grows even higher.

Duineboere may wear home-made moleskin trousers and *velskoene*, but they live snugly under thatch. Cottages usually have the roofs known as *wolwe-end dakke*, a simple, semi-hipped end with the thatch brought over to protect the top of the wall. Many cottages have white walls consisting of blocks of the local lime stone. An old *melkboom* gives shade, and under the tree you are more likely to find a wagon than a motor-lorry.

Sometimes the *duineboere* add to their incomes by looking after other men's sheep and cattle. They have their fowls, and even in very hard times they can usually rely on a diet of tortoise, mealies and milk. Theirs is a self-contained world. Coffee, sugar, salt and rice come from the shop. Otherwise they are independent. Even the tobacco is 'grown among the dunes, and here you discover the last of the old "Boer tobacco" kraals. Within a brushwood fence, in a kraal covered inches

deep with manure by the sheep, sheltered from the sun by a *renosterbos* roof, the tobacco plants flourish.

Golden-yellow leaves are stripped from the stems, sewn into bunches, and hung over the rafters in the drying shed. After drying the leaves are pressed flat between heavy stones and "sweated" until the tobacco becomes a rich brown colour. The women usually twist the rolls of tobacco expertly, aiming at a weight of two pounds (never less than that) and achieving it within an ounce. The test of a successful roll of "Boer tobacco" is to shred it and look for grains of saltpetre. That gives the tobacco the real gunpowder flavour, greatly desired by connoisseurs.

Figs and sour-figs are both fruits of the *strandveld*. Sour-fig jam made there is probably the most typical dish of the dune world. The men are all craftsmen when it comes to curing the skins of buck and making *riempies* for mats and chairs. They are also great well-diggers, but it cannot be said that

the water they bring up is the most palatable in the country. It gives a distinctive tang to coffee, but strangers find it too brack when taken alone.

Some of the cottages reveal surprises in the shape of valuable old furniture, a stinkwood wardrobe here and a kist there that any collector might envy. These are heirlooms. As a rule you will not persuade the owners to sell.

A stranger might lose his way in this unfenced world and wander for hours without meeting a human being. The *duineboere* are never at a loss. At night, or in a thick fog, they walk in the right direction; sometimes listening to the voice of the surf on the long beaches; always finding tracks and signs as clear to them as any guide-post.

Swellendam has fallen behind a little in the race for growth and importance, and perhaps it is all the happier for it. Once it was the third

town in the Cape, and the district stretched from Sir Lowry's Pass to Port Elizabeth. This town on seven hills, where mellow, gabled homesteads mingle with streamlined modern business houses was once the capital of South Africa's first republic. It was also the home of five South African presidents or their families.

Swellendam, in fact, is so full of history that I shall leave it to the writers of history books and select only those few episodes which appeal to me because everybody has not heard of them. Swellendam really came into being because the farmers were an independent and sometimes rebellious crowd who objected to paying taxes. Thus the Drostdy was built more than two centuries ago to remind the people of the frontier that there was a government.

This is the old Hottentot country. Ensign Schrijver clashed with the Hottentots near where Swellendam now stands as a result of a cattle theft; but the chief handed over the culprit and he was put to death. It cannot be said that the Hottentots of the Swellendam

district ever became a serious menace to the white settlers. Whole kraals of Hottentots perished in a smallpox epidemic early in the eighteenth century. Dragoons were stationed at Swellendam, but the Company must have been thinking of Bushman raiders.

Sir George Grey toured the district about a century ago, and then two Hottentots at a mission station were produced as curiosities because they could still speak the Hottentot language. Most of the Hottentots had gone to work for white farmers and had adopted the white man's language. Early last century there were only about five thousand Hottentots in the Swellendam area. Smallpox and alcohol had accounted for thousands of them in fifty years.

Not all the Hottentots were tamed. A reserve in the Barrydale area became a nest of cattle thieves. A farmer named Veldsman, who owned the farm Addersfontein in the middle of last century, was robbed so often that he lost his temper and shot a well-known Hottentot

thief dead. Law and order were properly established even in the remote districts at that time, and the friends of the thief decided to report the matter to the Swellendam magistrate. They were under the impression that some visible evidence of the crime would be necessary, so they cut off the dead man's head and took it with them in a sack.

That night they arrived at the farm of one Jan Haasbroek and told him the story. Haasbroek was serving out the evening wine ration when they arrived, and he gave them liberal tots. He did not wish to see his friend Veldsman in trouble, and so he sent him a message telling him that he had better clear out of the district. Haasbroek had shot a large baboon that day. During the night he secured the head of the thief and placed the baboon head in the sack. Next day he sent the Hottentots off on their mission with a bottle of wine.

You can imagine the sequel. The magistrate heard the story and asked to see the head. The Hottentots were dumbfounded when the

baboon head dropped out of the sack, and they were kicked out of the magistrate's office. It was a grim little episode. However, one must judge men against the background of the period they lived in. Veldsman escaped a charge of murder, but he left the district and lost his farm.

Some years later, in 1879, the Hottentots in the Barrydale reserve became so troublesome that the Swellendam magistrate secured authority to send a commando against them. The kraal was destroyed. Hottentots who owned plots of land were compensated by the grant of other plots at Zuurbraak mission. The others went to work for the farmers.

Swellendam had its first agricultural show as far back as 1842. A mail coach service to Cape Town started the following year. Bishop Gray described the place as "the neatest and most cheerful-looking village in the colony".

In those days when stock thieves were troublesome, every Cape village was demanding a

large gaol. Such a gaol, with many warders and prisoners, meant that contracts would be given out locally for food and clothing. Swellendam was split in 1857 by the problem of the gaol site. One section requested that the new gaol should be placed "between the English and Dutch churches and near their own shops and stores". Their opponents argued that the gaol should be near the Klip River, and they won the day. Fire wiped out a large part of Swellendam in 1865, the damage being estimated at forty thousand pounds. A gold rush not long afterwards failed to reveal an El Dorado, but the ostrich boom enriched many farmers.

I was talking the other day to Mr. P. G. M. Scholtz (my French Hoek friend) who was a teacher at the Buffeljagts River school near Swellendam early this century. He told me about the great floods which the newspapers almost ignored because the South African War was overshadowing the lesser tragedies along the banks of the Breede River and its tributaries.

"When the river rose, one family tried to find safety in the school-house," Mr. Scholtz recalled. "The water burst in and they climbed on tables and desks. Then the raw brick walls melted away and the roof came down. They climbed through the shattered ceiling and spent the night clinging to the rafters, haunted by the cries of animals in distress. One man at Buffeljagts lost his wife and five children. The man himself was drifting helplessly past a tree where a neighbour had taken refuge, and the neighbour hauled him to safety. They never found the bodies of the children, but the wife's skeleton was identified fifteen months later. Horses, cattle, sheep and ostriches were carried far out to sea and washed ashore near Cape Agulhas lighthouse. And for years afterwards the debris of the floods could be seen in trees hundreds of yards from the river bank."

Swellendam had twelve inches of rain in thirty-six hours during the floods of February 1902. Yellow-wood trees which had been growing near the summits of the Langeberg range were brought down by the mountain streams. One river swept

over a coloured settlement on the outskirts of Swellendam and sixteen people were drowned. All the roads were washed away, the telegraph lines went down, and trains could not move beyond Robertson. In a later flood in December 1903, Swellendam lost more than a hundred houses near the river banks, and the churches and schools were filled with refugees.

Swellendam was once the home of some fine craftsmen, men of renown in their day and now almost forgotten. I refer to the coppersmiths. You will find their work in the excellent Drostdy museum, and in the homes of the people. But the grand old trade has vanished. Steel has replaced the red metal of the ancients for cooking pots, and only a few collectors treasure the old-fashioned copper vessels.

Coppersmiths arrived at the Cape with Van Riebeeck. Many a copper kettle (and *konfoor* to keep the coffee hot) was hammered out in the early days. In later years the Castle armoury turned out much decorative brass work of a high

order, some of it dated and bearing the names of makers or owners. Dutch coppersmiths bound for Batavia were detained at the Cape in the time of the Van der Stels; and what rebukes came from headquarters as a result! As the Cape villages grew, coppersmiths settled there and made those articles of use and ornament which became scattered over the whole of South Africa.

Clever workers could make anything from a brandy still to a handsome little brass candlestick. Wine measures, cuspidors, hot water bottles and bed-warmers, brass ewers and basins, ash trays and gongs and stinkwood buckets bound with brass; all these were made in the Western Province.

At first the decorative copper and brass came from Holland, a country which still believes in artistic copper: White copper, known as "Batavian metal", was imported from the Dutch East Indies. However, the Cape craftsmen soon showed that they were more than rough workmen. Handsome door locks, hinges and

furniture fittings were made to the same designs that the Cape silversmiths adopted.

In the old Cape kitchens, copper was king. Huge open hearths gleamed and reflected the firelight in burnished copper. Every *boerevrou* was proud of her great tart pans, coffee mills, jam boilers, soap and jelly moulds, pestles and mortars, toasting forks and chestnut roasters, brass spice boxes, copper ham boilers, stew pans with black wooden handles, *oblietjie* pans, waffle pans, *konfyt* pans and large brass coffee urns. In those days of spits and roasting-jacks, the copper vessel fitted the scene perfectly. It was simple, and its purpose was never in doubt.

Coppersmiths used the simplest of tools, for this was not precision work. The copper was hammered into shape on a wooden block, decorated where necessary with a small hammer and punch. Antique dealers tell me that old Cape copper will never rise in value as old Cape silver has done; copper is so easy to fake. The modern craftsman uses the same tools as the coppersmiths of last century and the century

before that. Even the expert cannot tell the difference.

Swellendam's leading coppersmith towards the end of last century was an Englishman named Charlie Mathews, a very tall man and one of the most popular figures in the town. He wore a bushy white beard and moustache in his old age. Long before that he became an *ouderling* in the Dutch Reformed Church. Cricket was his sport. He never missed a funeral. Mathews took genuine pleasure in his work, and the mark "C. Mathews" is now found on a wide variety of pieces all over the country.

An earlier Swellendam craftsman was D. van As, who was followed by Willem G. van As of Kinko. The second Van As was famous for his coffee cans. There was also a J. van As at work on the farms Kadie and Rooiheuvel. These men were all capable of work of a high order. I have seen a stinkwood kist with heavy copper decorations made in Swellendam, and it is a piece of furniture worth preserving. The kist

was made from a tree-stump which was rescued from the 1901 floods in the district.

Copper kitchenware went out of fashion when the metal itself went up in price, and when servants to polish it became scarce. It was ideal for the wagon days, for it stood up to hard knocks. Cape coppersmiths made a *trek-ketel* which served its essential purpose far beyond the borders of South Africa. Today you can pay as much as twenty-five guineas for a small, artistic *koffie-ketel* with its *konfoor*, simply because such things seldom come on the market. And you will use it purely as an ornament while electricity makes your coffee. Only now are people coming to admire the beauty of Cape copper. Before they thought about it, some wonderful examples of the old craftsmen's art had gone into the melting-pot.

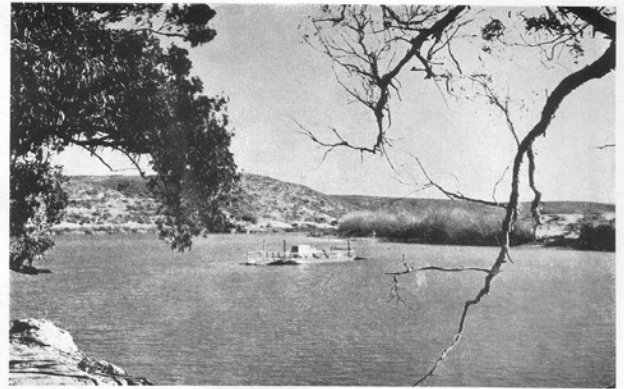
I suppose the most unusual craftsman Swellendam ever knew was a carpenter named Jean Henri Battenberg, who settled there in the 'fifties of last century. Dr. Edmund Burrows, a most interesting historian of the district, has

put forward the theory that this self-effacing carpenter and cabinet-maker was a member of the noble German family of Battenberg and thus an ancestor of the present Duke of Edinburgh. According to Dr. Burrows, the carpenter was one of Europe's unwanted aristocrats, sent to the Cape in much the same way as George Rex of Knysna. The plain, sound furniture Battenberg made is still to be seen in a number of Swellendam homes.

Have you ever crossed a river by pont? I suppose there are now many thousands of South Africans who have never seen such a thing. Yet the pont has played a great part in the story of the Western Province, and a romantic link will be broken when the final bridge is built.

One of the last ponts in the Western Province takes you over the Breede River at Malagas, south of Swellendam. One man hauls the pont over the river, and the last tariff I saw (only a few years ago) was three shillings for a

motor-car, half-a-crown for a wagon, and sixpence for a man on horseback or an ostrich.



"One of the last ponts in the Western Province takes you over the Breede River at Malagas, south of Swellendam."

And the first pont? The early Dutch explorers made rafts and some carried boats when they knew there would be rivers to cross. I believe the first regular pont was one built by Abraham de Haan fairly early in the eighteenth century. This pont worked across the Berg River about half a mile above the present Lady Loch bridge. A farm there is named Oude Pont. When the pont was

launched, every farmer living on the far side of the river was supposed to pay De Haan a muid of corn or its equivalent in other farm produce.

Thunberg crossed by this pont in 1773 and found Piet Joubert working it: "This man keeps the ferry going and thereby gets a sum of money yearly," Thunberg wrote. "Each farmer on the far bank contributes eight guilders a year. The farmers have to pay their quota be they rich or poor, whether using it or not, for many only travel to town with their goods in summer when the water is low and easily fordable by wagons."

This pont and its successors served the people of Wagenmakersvallei for well over a century. When the Wellington bridge was built at last, a local poet declared:

*The mighty Berg River
we've conquered at last
So the days of frail ponts
and detentions are past.*

Swellendam had a pont on the Breede River in the middle of the eighteenth century, and Governor Swellengrebel issued a *placaat* to regulate the traffic. Gideon van Zyl was the pont keeper, working on the same "muid of corn" basis as the Berg River man. Van Zyl had great difficulty in collecting his dues, however, and officials of the Dutch East India Company had to help him. This pont was not far from the present Grier Bridge.

Thomas Barry opened a store on the Breede River near Swellendam in 1829 and built a pont to bring customers and their wagons to his counter. "Colonial produce taken in exchange at liberal prices," he announced. James Holman, the blind traveller, used this pont. He described it as a "floating bridge forty-five feet long by twelve feet wide on which is placed both the carriage and the team". It was hauled across by ropes.

At some ponts the owner lived at a distance, so that a man had to swim across to call him. Sometimes a bell was provided for use at night. Free service was most unusual, but at Little Brak

River a pont was provided in 1863, and travellers were informed that there would be no toll or other charge.

Crowds turned out to see a pont launched. I have seen a newspaper report dated August 5, 1885 from Storms Vlei near Swellendam. "Officials and a number of ladies and gentlemen met to watch the floating of the new pont over the Zonder Einde River," wrote the correspondent. "It was called the Fredericka and launched by Mrs. Heatlie."

Naturally there were accidents. Many a wagon went into the stream, but that was not so serious. When a motor-car slips off the pont, the owner has a great deal more to worry about. One cannot really mourn the passing of the pont, though I have happy memories of one favourite crossing where I often swam beside the pont before driving on amid the summer dust.

When the first Dutch settlers reached the Swellendam district they found small herds of an

animal they had never seen before. In the Dutch of their day they called it the "Blauwe Bock" or blue-goat. And like early settlers everywhere, they set about shooting the game on sight. I wish they had left the "Blauwe Bock" alone, for now there are riddles which will never be solved.

It was a rare antelope with a rare colour, but a close relative of both the roan and the sable. No doubt the curved, scimitar horns and blue-grey or blue-purple coat made them think of a goat rather than an antelope. Evidently a herd of roan had separated from the parent herds in the north and roamed south to the coast. After centuries in isolation they developed characteristics of their own and became a distinct species. It is now known to science as *Ozanna leucophaea*, the extinct blue-buck or bloubok.

Roan and sable antelope have manes, but the blue-buck had only a short ridge of hair on the neck. The blue-buck was probably smaller than the roan, with longer and more slender horns,



"It was a rare antelope with a rare colour, but a close relative of — both the sable and the roan."

Photograph by courtesy of the Paris Museum of Natural History.

smaller feet, shorter ears and a different colour. So few relics of this interesting animal remain, and old descriptions are so conflicting, that it is difficult to be dogmatic about its appearance. You might search the whole of South Africa without much prospect of success, though there was a report of a pair of blue-buck horns in the Albany Museum, Grahamstown, more than half a century ago. Overseas museums once had a few specimens but most of them appear to have vanished as a result of decay or recent bombing. You can see a pair of blue-buck horns in the British Natural History Museum.

The blue-buck was the first animal in the Cape, and the only antelope, to be exterminated by white settlers. It was never plentiful, and so the Swellendam herds were shot off within about a century. Not a skin or skull, not a pair of horns has been found in the Swellendam district as a memorial to this departed race. Stockholm has a complete blue-buck collected by the Swedish naturalist

Wahlberg, and also a quagga. And the Paris Museum of Natural History possesses what is probably the finest blue-buck specimen in the world. This is preserved so well that the famous bluish tint which gave the blue-buck its name still lingers.

No one knows who discovered the blue-buck. The German astronomer Kolbe gave the first description of the buck early in the eighteenth century, not a very accurate one, and the quaint English translation of the period reads: "The blew goats are shaped like the tame, but are as large as the European hart. Their hair is very short and of a delicate blew; but the colour fades when they are killed to a blewish grey. Their beards, which are pretty long, add not a little to their comeliness. Their horns are not long in proportion to those of other goats, but they are very neat and run very curiously up in rings till within a little of the point, which is straight and smooth. Their legs are long, but not out of proportion. Their flesh is well tasted but rarely fat. And they are

rarely killed but for the sake of their skins, which are as good as those of a deer. Their flesh is generally given to the dogs."

Pallas, the Russian naturalist, gave a scientific description of the blue-buck later in the eighteenth century, basing his work on a number of skins sent to him from the Cape. Thomas Pennant, the English zoologist and author of the great work "British Zoology", bought a blue-buck skin in Amsterdam and came to very much the same conclusions as Pallas. "This is the species which, from the form of the horns and length of the hair, seems to connect the goat and antelope tribes," wrote Pennant. Thunberg, the Swedish scientist, was responsible for a most unscientific report about the blue-buck. When he was in the Swellendam district he wrote: "In this tract resides the blue-goat, which is one of the scarcest in the whole country. It is said to be very neglectful of its young, insomuch as it is often devoured by wild beasts, and this reason is given for its being so scarce. Its flesh has a more bitter taste

than that of the rest of the goat species." The blue-buck was destroyed by man, not the lion or leopard. If the theory put forward by Thunberg had been true, the small blue-buck herds would have vanished long before the white man came on the scene.

Le Vaillant, the French naturalist, is not regarded as an entirely reliable observer. He left a vivid description of the blue-buck, and I think it is accurate; for his zoology was usually better than his notes on people and places. Le Vaillant said that when he first saw a blue-buck he took it for a white horse. His hunter, a Hottentot, dropped it with one shot. "I rushed to the spot and enjoyed the pleasure of studying at leisure the rarest and most beautiful of African gazelles," wrote Le Vaillant. "The principal colour of the animal is a light greyish-blue; the belly and the inside of the legs are snow-white; the head in particular is handsomely marked with white. I did not notice that this gazelle looked like blue velvet, and that its skin changed colour after death, as

Sparrman says it does. Alive or dead, it looked just the same to me, and the colour of the specimen I brought back has never altered."

Many years later the hunter Selous noted that the roan antelope, so similar to the blue-buck, looked almost white when standing on an open plain with the sun shining on them. Cornwallis Harris, another hunter whose descriptions can be relied upon, pointed out that the hide of the roan in life is black, and that it changes to brown after death. Similar fading in the skin of the blue-buck would explain the change after death and the dimming of the blue-grey hair by the hide beneath.

Sir John Barrow tried to trace the blue-buck in the Soetmelk valley, where Le Vaillant had secured his specimen. Towards the end of the eighteenth century they had almost disappeared, and in 1800, according to Barrow, the last of the species was shot. These specimens went to Leyden, but they seem to have been lost. Twelve years later Lichtenstein declared that the blue-buck still survived among the

mountains in the north of the Swellendam district.

Then there was the antelope drawn by Samuel Daniell, the English painter who travelled with Truter and Dr. Summerville early last century. He depicted a grey buck coloured more like the blue-buck and the roan, but with a dark brown mark from forehead to nose, and a long, drooping mane. This specimen was sketched "on the edge of the karoo plains". The late Dr. Austin Roberts accepted this animal as the link between the southern blue-buck and the northern roan antelope. Other naturalists disagree, and insist that there was only one blue-buck. It is considered possible that seasonal changes may account for the discrepancies, and that the blue-buck may have had long hair in winter, short in summer.

There is still a *bloubok* in some Cape coastal districts; but this is a little creature of the dense bush, entirely different from the extinct blue-buck. Mr. James Douglas Logan of Matjesfontein, owner of one of the finest

collections of big-game heads I have ever seen, told me that he combed the Swellendam district some years ago in the hope of finding relics of the old blue-buck. He has the bontebok from the same area. But not a skull or horn or hide of the blue-buck could he find anywhere.

You see the last primeval forests of the Western Province along the road to Swellendam, in the kloofs of the Sonderend range and again in the recesses of the Langeberg. Those dark patches on the lower mountain slopes from Lindeshof to Sonderend village form the largest indigenous forest in the area; pockets of yellowwood, assegai, wild pear, stinkwood and ironwood. Man has looted the finest timber, yet good specimens remain.

Oubos is the largest of these forests, and it fills both sides of a wide kloof under Pilaarberg, the highest point in the range. Centuries ago the Dutch East India Company had sawpits in Oubos and Appelsbos not far away. Great

yellowwood trunks were sawn into two-inch planks, beams and rafters. It must have been a hard task for the slaves who hauled these heavy pieces out of the forests, across a stream, to the wagons bound for Cape Town. But this was the main source long before the felling started at Knysna. Olof Bergh, that fine old explorer, was there with Ensign Schrijver as far back as 1682, and they reported this wealth of timber to the company. Two huge clefts in the mountainside have been known as Groot Hendrik's Bos and Piet Moolman's Bos since the days of the explorers; but not even Dr. E. E. Massop, historian of the Dutch pathfinders, was able to trace the men who gave their names to those places.

Dr. Mossop was able to rediscover the "Ziekenhuis", the cave between Caledon and Sonderend (on the farm now known as Nethercourt) where the explorers sheltered and rested their sick companions. Here they cut their names in the wall just as they did in the Heerenlogement cave on the route to Nama-

qualand. Ziekenhuis later became a Dutch East India Company's cattle-post.

Grootvadersbosch, the "grandfather" of all forests in the eyes of the discoverers, lies beyond Swellendam in the Langeberg foothills. It is now but a shadow of its former grandeur, though forestry experts regard it as a noteworthy remnant. Forest still covers about a thousand acres. Thunberg, who was there in 1772, described Grootvadersbosch as "very thick and lofty". He said the company's wagons were taking only four loads of timber a year; certainly not a heavy exploitation. He stayed there, at Riet Vallei farm, for several days "to arrange the collections we had made and to repair our wretched carriage, which had been shattered to pieces by the stony and mountainous roads, a cart so small, old and crazy that probably nobody, either before or after us, can boast of having made in such a vehicle so long and dangerous a journey into this mountainous country."

After declaring his hardships, Thunberg got down to his botany. He noted certain acrid berries which were used for the colic. And he found a species of pepper, called by the country people *stertPeper* and used as a spice. (The name has died out, but probably he was referring to *bospeper* or *wildepeper*.) Thunberg also recorded the uses of the various timbers. Assegai wood was made into poles for wagons; and, of course, the Hottentots fashioned their spear shafts from it. A type of thorn-tree was made into brakes for wagon-wheels, yokes for oxen and charcoal. The *kreupel-boom* bark was used for dressing and tanning leather. Spoons and wooden bowls were carved from the appropriate *lepelboom*.

Grootvadersbosch was granted to Roelof Olofsz in 1724, and it was cut up, long ago into four farms. The ruins of the home of the Widow Spies, who had it late in the eighteenth century, may still be traced, and there are many old graves. Grootvadersbosch also has a treasure legend. One old Spies sold a number of horses one

day for the equivalent of eight hundred pounds, and died the same night. Everyone knew that the cash had been paid. No one but Spies knew where it had been hidden. They are still searching for that eight hundred pounds.

Near the raped Grootvadersbosch are smaller forests, hemmed in by gorges and so inaccessible that man has been almost defeated in the attempt to touch the virgin recesses. A forest *officer*, Mr. J. J. Kotze, was entranced by these undesecrated fastnesses. It was a feast, the old rough-barked stinkwood which has almost disappeared from the Knysna forests growing here as it did a thousand, two thousand years ago. The place is called Bosmansbos, after a coloured man who lived in a cave at the end of last century and made a living by collecting honey, buchu and firewood. He left twenty hollow stinkwood stems. Otherwise it is still virgin forest.

So the Western Province ends gently along the rivers and dunes and amid the mountains of the Swellendam district. All the way from Table Bay to the last outposts the maps give you memories of

old explorers, old chiefs, vanished animals. One of Swellendam's picnic spots is Oude Tuin, and there are the remnants of the garden of Nougá Seree, the Hottentot leader, and the graves of his people. Here round Swellendam was the paradise of the old hunters. Bontebokskloof, Buffelsfontein, Elands-pad, Harteebesrivier, Leeuwfontein, Renosterfontein, Zeekoevlei; those names and many more are on the map. And in the old mountain passes, scored deeply into the rocks, are the very wheel-tracks of the men who drove their wagons into the new country and bestowed those names which carry the true ring of romance and adventure.

THE END

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